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Law and Love, a study of Quomodo
Dilexi.

LAW AND LOVE

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

THE HOLY GHOST THE COMFORTER.

By the Rev. G. F. HOLDEN, late Vicar of All Saints, Margaret Street, W. With an Introduction by the BISHOP OF LONDON. Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. net.

READINGS FROM LAW'S "SERIOUS CALL."

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LAW AND LOVE

A STUDY OF
QUOMODO DILEXI
(PSALM CXIX. 97-104)

BY
FRANCIS LEITH BOYD
VICAR OF ST. PAUL'S, KNIGHTSBRIDGE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
THE BISHOP OF LONDON

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TO MY MOTHER

2 TIM. iii. 14, 15



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INTRODUCTION

THIS is a strong book by a strong man on one of the strongest utterances in religious literature. It hangs very closely together in the texture of the argument, and the way in which each chapter leads from thought to thought. It is not possible, therefore, in the case of this book, to give a summary of the argument, or to quote certain passages as typical, for the argument is the book, and any passage apart from its context would be unmeaning.

I will therefore take one passage on p. 121, which seems to me to give the gist of the book, and which, at any rate, shall be the text of this Introduction—

“Apart from Christ there is no comfort at all. The Word of God contains an assurance which is absolutely unique.”

In other words, as Christians, we are stewards of five “mysteries of God.” A mystery in the New Testament is something which has been kept secret, but which has now been revealed.

- (1) What is behind this puzzling world ?
- (2) What is the purpose of it ?
- (3) Can sin be forgiven ?
- (4) How can sinners be prepared for Heaven ?
- (5) What is the relation of God to this world ?

All these things are secrets once kept hidden, but which are now revealed ; they are therefore mysteries of *light*, and not of darkness. It is only by a firm understanding of these mysteries that we can use the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm in the proper way in our Christian service. The answer is fivefold, as the question is.

(1) Behind the Universe is not fire, air, or water, but a Person, nay (as the mystery of Light opens out), Three Persons in one God. This throws an immense light on the character and Being of God as *Love*, and gives a new meaning to the Psalmist's delight in God's law, for an abstract law is one thing, the Will of a Living Person is another.

(2) The purpose of the world and of life is *Love*. We are alive because God wanted to spread happiness, and said, "Let there be life ; let there be light." We are redeemed out of love ; the heavens open at Pentecost, and we are sanctified in love, and therefore while there are backwaters of pain and suffering and apparent cruelty, the main stream of life is love, and again it is only in this faith we can chant bravely and hopefully the Psalm which is the subject of this book.

(3) But "can sin be forgiven?" "Certainly not," said the clever writer, Mr. Greg, thirty years ago. "Sin cannot be forgiven." It is the great Christian secret (now revealed) that it can. The Babe lying in the manger, the cross on Good Friday, the empty tomb on Easter Day, the Ascension, were all necessary

parts of the Redemption; but the great Christian "mystery" is that, when the broken law was perfectly obeyed by One who had first bound Himself to us "nearer than breathing, and closer than hands and feet," sin could be forgiven, and we might have "peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." No one could cheerfully chant the praise of the "Love of God" to-day unless he could say at the same time, "Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

(4) But how is the hardened sinner to become a saint, and fit for heaven? This brings us to the fourth secret or mystery, and that is the *power of grace*. "Oh! send out Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead me and bring me to Thy holy hill and to Thy dwelling." This touching prayer was gloriously answered in the truths we celebrate at Christmas, at Easter, at the Ascension, and on Whit-Sunday. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," that is, the full stream of grace and the full light of truth, and it is when we grasp the reality of grace, the power of it, and the way in which we may live each day "by the grace of God," and ask to receive "grace *for* grace," that we can enter into the daily recitation of a Psalm which expresses a soul which waits upon God.

(5) What is the relation of God to the world? The one hundred and nineteenth Psalm prepares us for the full answer in the Sacramental system of the Church. The answer has been a threefold one historically. There

was the answer of the Pantheist who identified God with the world, of the Deist who banished Him to a far corner of it, and of the Jew who made the world a veil, through which God blessed His children. It was no Pantheist and no Deist who wrote the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm. Outward and visible signs were familiar to those who looked back with gratitude to "the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night"; and to the Jew, as to the Christian, the sunrise is a sacrament of hope, and the sunset a sacrament of peace. It is only, then, a step to apprehend how God loves to bless us by His Sacraments still, and how Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Communion are no unmeaning signs, but, like the Father's kiss, the robe, the ring, the home, the feast, and the shoes given to the prodigal son, signs of love and welcome and grace and hope. Instead, then, of finding this noble Psalm out of date, the believing Christian throws more force and fervour into it than can be really there without his faith, and it is in the hope that this exposition of it may stimulate the devotion and fervour with which it will be chanted, and may bring a manly and virile tone into services of praise, that I commend it to the diocese for Lent.

A. F. LONDON.

Feast of the Epiphany, 1909.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN the year 1904 I was ordered abroad for my health, and spent the winter amid the snow and sunshine of Meran, in the South Tyrol. The remedy was as pleasant as it was efficacious, but it separated me to a great extent from the regular devotional system which occupies so large a place in the life of a parish priest. Amongst other means of supplying this loss, I used at noon a little service which happens to be published in a very convenient form.¹ The greater part of this service is occupied with the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, and as I read it each day, the Psalm became more and more the starting-point of thoughts and meditations which occupied me during the succeeding hours. This little book is the record of some of these. They have been written down with the prayer and in the hope that they may prove suggestive to others, and, even if they do not convey any new thoughts, may indicate a method of using Holy Scripture which has been of the greatest benefit to myself. I need not say that although I had hardly any books with me at the time, the recollections of a good many books are represented here. On getting back to my study I corrected inaccurate quotations,

¹ "The Office of Sext." Mowbray & Co. 1d.

and made notes of particular indebtedness as far as possible; but during the last few years I have read the following books on the Psalms with some care, and it is certain that their contents must have entered into these meditations to a greater extent than I am able now to trace.

FRANCIS LEITH BOYD.

AUGUSTINE, ST.: "Enarrationes in Psalmos."

EWALD, DR. G. H. A. VON: "Commentary on the Psalms."

JOHNSON, G. H. S., ELLIOTT, C. I., and COOK, F. G.: "The Book of Psalms."

KIRKPATRICK, A. F., D.D.: "The Psalms," in the Cambridge Bible for Schools.

DOUBLET, L'ABBÉ: "Les Psaumes Étudiés."

NEALE, DR. J. M., and LITLEDALE, R. F.: "Commentary on the Psalms."

PROTHERO, ROWLAND E.: "The Psalms in Human Life."

WORDSWORTH, BP.: "The Holy Bible, with Notes."

HENRY, MATTHEW: "An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments."

TRAPP, DR. J.: "A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments."

ALEXANDER, W. (Archbishop Armagh): "The Witness of the Psalms."

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THE KING'S INSTITUTE
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

"In the Psalter you may find an accurate survey and delineation of the whole life of man, the dispositions of the soul, and the movements of the mind."

ST. ATHANASIUS: "Epistle to Marcellinus."

PSALM CXIX

12

Quomodo dilexi !

97 Lord, what love have I unto Thy law : all the day long is my study in it.

98 Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies : for they are ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than my teachers : for Thy testimonies are my study.

100 I am wiser than the aged : because I keep Thy commandments.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way : that I may keep Thy word.

102 I have not shrunk from Thy judgements : for Thou teachest me.

103 O how sweet are Thy words unto my throat : yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth.

104 Through Thy commandments I get understanding : therefore I hate all evil ways.

CHAPTER I

THE WORLD, THE PSALM, AND THE STANZA

Ps. cxix. 97-102.

WE live in difficult times. It is natural, indeed, for every generation to feel that the duties and problems presented to it are more exacting and perplexing than those which have been required in preceding periods; but, allowing for this tendency, we may fairly assume that the tasks which have been set to us include elements of peculiar difficulty. Our age is pre-eminently a period of transition. We are still engaged in estimating and harmonising the new discoveries of science which sprang into light some fifty years ago. The older members of our generation can recall the great upheaval which took place in every department of thought and life when Darwin and Faraday gave the results of their researches to the world. That ferment did not do much at first to shake the opinions on which popular religious beliefs were largely based. The men of genius who introduced the new era were possessed of far too wide an outlook to feel or to suggest antagonisms between their discoveries and the existing fabric of belief. Their work was wholly creative and constructive. But their pupils—the second order of students,

such as Tyndall, Huxley, and Spencer—had not the same breadth of mind and comprehensiveness of view. These became the primary distributors of the new knowledge, and from them the work of popularising it passed down to a third and fourth order of lecturers and writers, whose minds were necessarily still less capacious and more specialised, and their outlook proportionately narrowed. As the new light descended by these agencies, and broadened through the popular mind, an antagonism was fomented between religion and science which had not been felt by intellects of the first order, and it deepened in contempt for religion, and even in coarseness of feeling and expression, as it sank from grade to grade, penetrating the understanding of all classes.

Much of this has now passed away. A clearer view of both religion and science has effected a new harmony between them in the best educated minds, and men of the first rank in science are once more finding a place for revealed religion in their system of thought. But just as it took at least thirty years for the first revolution of thought and feeling to sink into the mind of the masses, so we must be content to wait for a similar period before the reconciliation shall be generally effective. Meanwhile, the fury of controversy has ceased, but the fruits of indifference remain. The nation at large is not hostile to religion, but it is unquestionably lukewarm. For the moment religion is classed amongst the things which do not matter. Its gifts are regarded as being unobjectionable, but not worth the taking trouble to win, still less of sufficient value to be achieved

at the cost of sacrifice. A life of elementary morality is generally recognised to be essential, but it is felt that this can be secured apart from religion, though religion may possibly, for a certain class of mind, offer a useful stimulus to moral effort, and so far must be accounted advantageous. But all that is meant by a life devoted to God has faded from the belief and imagination of the nation as a whole.

An attempt has been made to salvage the fragments of the spiritual life which has thus been wrecked, by drawing a curious distinction between religion and the expression and observance of religion as though these could exist apart. It is indeed true that the spiritual life of man is not obliterated the moment it ceases to be exercised by spiritual acts. If a candle is put under a bushel it is not extinguished immediately, and the lamps of the five foolish virgins were only in process of going out when the supreme moment arrived. But we know too much now about the laws of cause and effect to be deluded by any sophistry which assumes that spiritual faculties, or any faculties, can be sustained, and still more have growth and development, unless they have their characteristic and appropriate exercise. It ought to be difficult for us to misunderstand what is meant by living on our spiritual capital, or to suppose that a quality of our nature which is "wrapped up in a napkin" can do anything but dwindle and decay. There is not much comfort to be derived from the contemplation of our latent spiritual life, but there is ample ground for anxiety in the spectacle of our neglected religious observances. Places of

worship are scantily attended and sacraments frankly ignored. There are, of course, some churches which are crowded and some altars which are thronged; but in every such case it is rather because men are attracted by some secondary influence than because they realise their obligation to God or seek for the divine means of grace. Rhetoric, music, beautiful ceremonial, personal work on the part of officials, a comprehensive organisation, these are instruments which will win adherents to any cause. It is a matter for thankfulness that in this period of transition they are all so frequently and ably exercised for the cause of Christ. But a congregation gathered together by such attractions as these has not necessarily any relationship to God at all. It may not in its essential meaning be much more than a mutual improvement society. Indeed, we hear religious worship usually spoken of from the point of view of personal edification, almost never from the side of obligation towards God. Its proceedings are estimated as if they were the *ménù* of a dinner. What we like and what we think agrees with us is the sole standard of reference.

It would be impossible not to conclude, even if we did not know it from separate sources of information, that, along with the cessation of public religious observance, there has been a decline in habits of secret prayer and meditation upon the Word of God. Against the latter the forces of the new learning have beaten with exceptional severity. The regard which the last generation had for the Scriptures was based upon a peculiar and impossible interpretation of their origin. In

addition to their power to teach and inspire with authority, they were held to be a mechanical and infallible oracle, any words of which, in any context or isolation, might be taken to point out the pathway of faith and duty. Like the poetry of Virgil, the Bible was constantly used to give direction when opened by chance, and it was gradually elevated or degraded into a position resembling that which was assigned at Ephesus to the "image of Diana, which fell down from heaven."

It was impossible that such an attitude could remain unassailed. The advantage of it was that it led men to the devout study of Scripture, and in that they found food for their souls. Its peril was that it was a superstitious and unfounded valuation, and when it was overthrown, as it was certain to be, the reaction created a general neglect of Holy Scripture and a widespread contempt for its guidance.

Our difficulty is that we are called to make our spiritual journey while this reaction is still in force. Thirty years hence, apparently, the atmosphere will be quite different, but by that time the probation of many of us will be over, and our opportunity will have passed away. There is need that we should specially brace ourselves to contend with the hindrances of our time; we have to gird up the loins of our mind to do things which are never particularly easy, but which a little later may be less difficult. In order to win the blessing and help which are offered to us in the means of grace, we have to force our way through the palisades which have been recently erected around them.

These pages are the record of an attempt to use a few verses of Scripture as the basis and starting-point of communion with God; they form an invitation to such communion, and suggest a method of obtaining it.

The one hundred and nineteenth Psalm is a supreme expression of the experiences of a human soul which is shown to us as clinging closely to God while the ripples of life's stream pass swiftly over his spirit and the currents flow strongly below. At the first glance, it presents the appearance of sameness and iteration; but this apparent monotony belongs to it because it faithfully reflects the life of man. The incidents on the surface of human life repeat themselves with but little variety; even when the ripples are lashed into billows, as they are sometimes in every man's life, we look out over the waters and see the same monotony, wave following wave with unchanging similarity. But not so readily discerned, or below the surface and out of sight, are the currents which sweep along men and things with terrible power, the investigation of which is at once full of interest, and a primary necessity for safety and progress. As we look more closely at this Psalm, all the trials and difficulties of life come into sight: the petty annoyances, the great assaults, the disasters, the triumphs, all are here. We see the writer bearing his share of the Divine chastisement, and acquainted with discipline and sorrow;¹ he has to undergo contempt and persecution;² there was a period when his life was in danger;³ besides all this, he endures the great

¹ Vers. 50, 67, 71, 75.

² Vers. 39, 134.

³ Ver. 109.

temptation to apostasy which comes from being associated with unworthy members of his own religion,¹ and his constancy is maintained not so much by reasoning upon God's providential government of the world, though he has recourse to that,² as by a simple faith which has grown out of his personal experience of the Divine fellowship, by which he turns away his eyes from the troubled surface of life, and casts himself upon God.³ Such was the inner life and struggle of some servant of God in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The moment we begin to examine separately each utterance of the Psalm, we find the infinite variety of human experience rippling along its surface, while underneath gleam those great principles of faith and duty by which the soul of man anchors itself on God. It is no wonder, then, that this great Psalm, written perhaps in the fifth century before Christ, has always been a delight to those who have learned the seriousness of life.

It is said to have been used liturgically by the companies of Israelites who went up to Jerusalem from various parts of the Holy Land to keep the appointed feasts. We know that they made the journey in caravans for mutual protection and social intercourse. It was so that our Lord went up, when He was twelve years old, to Jerusalem. S. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin lost Him for three days on the homeward journey, "supposing Him to be in the company." During His ministry, He regularly went up in such a

¹ Vers. 115, 136.

² Vers. 118, 155.

³ Ver. 114.

company as this to the feasts, and the triumph of His final entry into Jerusalem was created by an intensification of the usual devotional observances which were performed during these pilgrimages. Along the journey they seem to have sung this great Psalm of the Law. The fifteen "Songs of the Degrees," which follow it in the Psalter,¹ were undoubtedly used as part of the processional litany; perhaps the latter were sung as the worshippers drew nearer to Jerusalem, while the one hundred and nineteenth expressed the principles, longings, and hopes which gave the impulse to the pilgrimage and marked its earlier stages.

The Christian Church, inheriting the liturgical treasures of the Church of the Old Covenant, gave decisive prominence to this great Psalm. Out of the seven services appointed to be said each day, no fewer than four were entirely occupied with it. Evidently the Church wished this presentment of the underlying principles of religion to sink deeply into the hearts of her children: they would be less likely to be tossed too and fro by the changes and chances of this mortal life if the deep assurances exhibited here might be accumulated in the sanctuary of their souls. It is difficult to estimate what calmness and strength were infused into the Church by the daily contemplation of the truths which this Psalm reveals. From the time when it was written, down to our own day, biographies and diaries of men who have walked triumphantly upon the waters of life have testified to the power and help received from its convincing declarations.

¹ PSS. CXX.—CXXXIV.

There is a well-known story ¹ of William Wilberforce, who moved and carried the abolition of the slave trade, that, standing on a certain day at Hyde Park Corner in the middle of the London season, where all the wealth and splendour and power of the Empire were sweeping around him, he felt the awful force and influence of worldliness beating in upon his soul. With almost irresistible powers of persuasion there came to him the suggestion that success consists in riches and recognition—the power of earth and the praise of men. So all down Piccadilly he repeated to himself the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, and by the time he reached Piccadilly Circus the tyranny was overpast. Fortunate man to have such a weapon ready and prepared for use! But what a power must be enshrined in these hundred and seventy-six verses that they should contend successfully in the heart of a man against the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them!

Even better known than this instance is the part which the Psalm has played in the life and work of John Ruskin. As soon as he was able to learn anything, he was taught by his mother to study the Scriptures; and, referring to these early lessons, he says, "It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother thus taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was, to my child's mind, chiefly repulsive—the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm—has now become of all the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God." It was no case here of deliverance in

¹ Referred to in Prothero's "The Psalms in Human Life."

sudden temptation, but rather of building up firm foundations on which his whole life and character were afterwards to rest. "The guiding principle of 'Modern Painters' is that glad submission to the divine law which is the keynote of Psalm cxix. . . . By the love that inspires obedience to law, Ruskin was separated from the rising school of science; by the fruits of that obedience—precision, exactitude, fidelity, realism—he was distinguished from the followers of the expiring romantic school of art. His own teaching was that, by the two qualities in combination—in other words, by docility and faith—men may win back the childlike heart, which alone penetrates the mysteries of nature, and regain the power of expressing the beauty and truth with which the external world reveals the Divine law."¹

The Psalm consists of twenty-two stanzas, and is written in the form of an elaborate acrostic. Each stanza is named after one of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order, and each verse of a stanza begins with the letter by which the stanza is marked. Several of the Psalms are written according to different varieties of this method. The third chapter of the Lamentations of Jeremiah corresponds very closely to the arrangement of the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm. This was a common form into which the poetry of the period was frequently cast. It is so far foreign to our recognised poetical methods that it wears for us an appearance of artificiality which does not really belong to it. We happen to be

¹ "The Psalms in Human Life," p. 327.

accustomed to the much more exacting mechanism of metre and rhyme. It is not too much to say that the recurrent resonance of sound at the end of our lines is a far more trivial appliance than the memorial letters at the beginning of the lines in Hebrew poetry; for the rhyme brings the method into the very heart of the thought. Western poets of the first rank have acknowledged that rhymes have suggested some ideas to them, and have been a hindrance to the expression of others. To begin a line with a particular letter is a much less stringent, if less suggestive, mechanism than to finish it with a rhyme.

The use of this method may at least serve to remind us that the Psalms claim to be poetry and not merely rhythmic prose. To make a mistake on this point is to create great trouble for ourselves in their interpretation. They frankly appeal to the imagination and use it in the service of revealed religion. In the Scriptures every kind of literary method is brought into use: history, biography, autobiography, prophecy, letters, and poetry.

Perhaps we are less able to do justice to its poetry, and to the gifts which its poetry brings, than to any other of the methods which the inspired writers have employed. Our inheritance of Puritan feeling has made us both suspicious and unappreciative of the employment of art in the service of religion. Music has won its way back to our services, possibly more than won its way; but we are still unsettled and uncertain as to its place, degree, and function, and we are far from being able to appropriate its gifts naturally and without

self-consciousness. A beautiful ceremonial is to be found in many churches, but there are few in which the atmosphere is not charged with the self-consciousness which pervades what we call a "pageant," rather than with that inevitable and natural feeling which belongs to the expression of great and present realities.

The ecclesiastical use of painting and sculpture is still the subject of a controversy which is liable to find its way into the courts of law. It is not altogether different with poetry. There was a time when metrical hymns (a few of which may be described as poetry) were an innovation the propriety of which was fiercely contested. The notion of expressing the truths of revelation through the channel of metre and rhyme was repugnant to those who had been spiritually educated in the bare and unimaginative methods of Puritanism; and at this moment hymns are illegal in the Church of England. It is only with an effort, as the result of deliberate reasoning within ourselves, that we are able to use the appliances of artistic expression in the service of our religious life; there is no possibility for any one in our time of moving naturally and without any tinge of affectation along these lines towards God. And if here and there an individual has achieved this, he is like a man born out of due time, and stands in all the peril which surrounds those who have escaped from the limits, which are also the safeguards, of their age. In any case it is better to move forward cautiously in such a progress as this, but doubly so when it has in it the force and frenzy peculiar to a movement which is a reaction as well as an advance.

Accordingly, it is not a very easy thing for us, situated as we are, to use and interpret rightly the poetry of Scripture. We do not expect to find poetry there at all. We do not understand what alliance there can be between the operation of man's imagination and the revelation of God's truth. We can believe that the Divine Spirit may illuminate the intellect, direct the conscience, and inspire the understanding; but His work through the imagination has been practically excluded from the curriculum of our religious education. It is not too much to say that inspiration as a quality of poetry means a very different thing to most of us from inspiration as exhibited in Scripture, and it is quite foreign to our training and character to apply it in its latter sense to anything which is really poetry.

The consequence is that we are apt to interpret the Psalms as though they were dogmatic statements similar in kind to the thirty-nine articles, or the decrees of a Church Council. It is perfectly true that the Psalter itself contains within it the whole range of literary method which is to be found in the Scripture at large. Here, too, within this narrower compass, there is history and prophecy and autobiography, there are letters and visions, ceremonial customs, moral enactments, and dogmatic statements: every variety of method and expression finds a place in this book. But that which distinguishes the Psalter from other books in the Bible is the fact that everything in it is passed through the alembic of the imagination, and is expressed as a truly inspired poet would express it. We must not take sentences out of the Psalms and dissect them as if

they were mere historical phenomena or mathematical problems. It is related of a distinguished mathematician that having been twitted with his aloofness from poetry, he settled down to the study of Milton's "Paradise Lost," and read it carefully through. "I have read it most attentively," he said shortly afterwards, "but I do not see what it is intended to prove." He, at any rate, treated it more reasonably than did that great number of persons who reduced it to a system of dogmatic theology, and that still greater number who do the same with the book of Psalms.

The poetic character of the Psalter gives it a unique power to express the vicissitudes of the Church and of the individual soul. We have seen that Psalms cxix. to cxxxiv. were used as processional litanies by the pilgrims of the Old Covenant as they journeyed from distant parts of Judæa to the Holy City, in order to keep the great feasts of obligation. But in their appropriateness for this purpose they were fitted also to describe the spiritual journey of the soul of man along the narrow way from the confines of this natural life into which we are born to the presence and the open vision of God. All Scripture, of course, has this secondary sense, as it is called, by which, whatever may be the immediate topic in hand, the experiences of man's spiritual life are portrayed and illustrated; but the poetic character of the Psalms, their hallowing and employment of the imagination, brings this secondary sense especially near the surface. Nowhere else is the veil which hangs before the throne of God, and that which covers the face of human life, more

decisively withdrawn, so that the true springs and issues of life stand revealed in their eternal nature.

If we were not dealing here with the methods of poetry it would be fanciful and trivial to see any meaning or purpose in the letters which distinguish the stanzas of this Psalm. But we must suppose that that part of the method which was used as its mechanism must have been the subject of deliberate intention.

The Hebrew letters have each a meaning; Mem, the thirteenth letter of the alphabet, which marks the stanza with which we are to be occupied, is said to mean "water," and this significance makes it a striking and suitable symbol to distinguish these verses which describe "the sweetness and profitableness of the study of the Word of God."

For all through Scripture the message of the Divine Word is represented as being to the thirsty soul of man what refreshing water is to his parched mouth and fevered body. "Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters," cries the royal Prophet to his countrymen in their exile. "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," says He of whom the Prophet spoke; "whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The Apostle hands down to us with unbroken continuity of teaching this great identity of the material and spiritual necessities of man, when he describes the rock which was smitten by Moses in the wilderness from which the water

gushed out and the streams flowed withal, and declares that the people drank therein of a spiritual Rock which followed them, "and that Rock was Christ." The Psalmist, then, when he puts this letter at the head of his stanza, connects his joy in the law of God with these intuitions, which men have felt at such vast distances of time and circumstance, and yet with such remarkable identity of experience; intuitions which move eternally in the heart of man, and are to be found in the spiritual treasury of every one of us. We address ourselves to his message with needs which he is able to satisfy, and capacities to which he can appeal.

CHAPTER II

LOVE AND DEVOTION FULFILLING THE LAW

“Lord, what love have I unto Thy law : all the day long is my study in it.”—Ps. cxix. 97.

MORE than one student of the Psalter has observed with surprise that it is always the law which is spoken of in the Psalms with chief joy.¹ Mercy and forgiveness are usually mentioned with sadness, as if the thought of what they cost cast a shadow on the Psalmist's mind. But the Psalms concerning the law are always full of delight. The writers cannot contain themselves for the joy which they have in thinking of it; they are never weary of its praise. We see here how revealed religion develops the natural resources of man. In every age those who have sought for some fixed and abiding principle amongst the shifting forces of life have obtained a refuge and a resting-place in law. Here it was that the thoughtful Greek found comfort in the midst of Gods many and Lords many, of rival philosophies and conflicting schools of thought—

¹ Ruskin, “Modern Painters.”

“O may I have grace to keep for ever
The reverent purity of all words and deeds
For which there are sanctioned
Laws that rule on high,
Born and prevailing in heaven above,
Whose sire is God alone :
No race of mortal men begat them,
No, nor shall oblivion ever fold them to sleep :
Great is the Deity in these
And groweth not old.”¹

It is more than a coincidence that the new learning in our own day has found its starting-point in the recognition of law. Men have discovered that they are able to control Nature by obeying her, and we cannot be surprised that this principle, which has produced such marvellous results both in material and spiritual life, should have been exalted for a while to the exclusion of every other consideration. The Hebrews alone have been able to harmonise the fixity of law with the supremacy of personality—

“I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”²

With them we see not only reasonable and contented obedience to a principle, but also joyful allegiance to a Person. The ecstasy of the Psalmist as he meditates on the law has all the quiet and assured happiness which comes from feeling that our mind is securely stayed on truth; and, in addition to that, the enthusiastic loyalty and devotion to Him in whom is embodied

¹ Sophocles, O.T. 863.

² Mal. iii. 6.

all that we believe and trust, and of whose nature law itself is the outcome and expression.

Accordingly, we learn from the Psalmist how great is the joy of duty when it is inspired by love. Half the battle of our sanctification is won when we have learned this lesson, and the pain and weariness of it are gone altogether. Duty is a glorious mistress, but her service is slavery and drudgery at the best. To live a life of moral effort, governed only by the driving powers of conscience or the arbitrary restraints of public opinion, may bring into a man's nature many elements of nobleness, and some satisfactions, but it can never give him joy. To be the servant of law as it is manifested in Christ Jesus is to enter into perfect freedom, and to bring ourselves within range of those spiritual delights which have been accounted to be the consummation of blessedness by all who have known them. The testimony of the Psalmist is continued in the unbroken experience of mankind. "Wherefore of Law," said Hooker, "there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world, all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power, both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."¹

But it is not only that love makes duty pleasant and easy, it also brings into the service of conscience

¹ Eccles. Pol., Bk. I. *ad fin.*

a new power. S. Augustine says that by love lust is driven out—that lust which striveth against the spirit so that we cannot do the works of the law; and Dr. Chalmers embodied this truth in a famous phrase when he spoke of “the expulsive power of a new affection.” Most people have realised that we do easily the things we love, and make ready sacrifices for those to whom our hearts are given.

But probably it is precisely here that many will feel themselves to be weakest towards God. That we ought to love Him and so perform His law quite easily we know and believe. We are perfectly aware that all our best interests would be strengthened if we could give our hearts to Him. Nay, more, we really desire to love Him, and it is one of the efforts of our life to do so, and one of our sincerest regrets that we so greatly fail. We hope to achieve it some day, and toil on, rendering such allegiance as we can, looking forward to the time when our affections shall be influenced by our endeavours. We long, we naturally long, for a more spontaneous fellowship with God. The late Archbishop Temple once made a profound impression upon a congregation assembled at one of his confirmations by appealing to this desire. Every one remembers—and remembers with affectionate regard—that iron exterior, that hard and unsympathetic voice, which seemed to be the very embodiment of justice, duty, law, and logic in their sternest and most abstract form. To those, therefore, who knew him only in his public and official life it came with all the force of the unexpected when he said to the candidates,

"As you grow older you will want many things; but unless you turn your backs upon the hopes which at this moment fill your hearts, there is one thing which you will wish for with more and more intensity than for any other object of desire: you will want to love God more." It is a comfort to us when we thus recognise the poverty of our affections towards God, to see that even so spiritual a nature as that of the Psalmist has known what it is to suffer from this defect. For this opening verse of the stanza is an exclamation; he expresses surprise; he finds in his heart at last that love of God which he had pursued so long, and which seemed, like some mirage of the desert, continually to elude his grasp. Knowing as he does how much of his nature longs for the world and cleaves to the things of time and sense, he cannot but wonder at the new life which has come to him, and at the power and goodness of God by whose grace it has been accomplished. It is clear, then, that this verse sets before us an attitude towards God the germs of which, indeed, are present in the heart of every one, but the development of which into a conscious possession and realised activity needs intense and continuous effort. It will be helpful to examine a little more closely both the quality itself and the process of attaining it.

We cannot fail to be struck by the fact that throughout Scripture love towards God is not only recommended, but enjoined. Many a soul has replied to these frequent commandments to love, "How can I force my affections? I can make myself do my duty,

I can even compel myself to make great sacrifices, but I cannot create love for God or for my neighbour if it does not spring up naturally in my heart." Yet love would not be the subject of a commandment in Scripture unless the attainment of it were within the possibilities of our nature; the very fact that it is laid down as a law declares that it is something which we may accomplish.

As we look more closely at the phraseology of the New Testament, we become aware that two very distinct words are being used for love. There is one which expresses the physical side of it;¹ the natural tendency by which one animal is drawn towards another. It appears in English in the first syllable of the word "philanthropy." Undoubtedly that word expresses nothing more than the desire of man to help his fellow men. It is a purely animal quality. The lower animals feel just the same for each other, and very often they feel and express it for men. Thus in the parable of Dives and Lazarus we read that where human sympathy failed the lower order of creation supplied it: "the dogs came and licked his sores." The poverty of our language in describing different aspects of affection has led, or compelled us, to describe this feeling as "love"; perhaps it would have saved a good deal of confusion if we might have appropriated to it such a word as "liking." Let us acknowledge at once that we cannot create or destroy this natural faculty of "liking." We seldom quite know why we like or dislike people. Usually we

¹ φιλεῖν.

acknowledge that there is no sufficient reason for it, but that the fact is patent and irresistible. We can and we ought to endeavour to regulate such spontaneous and inevitable emotions so that they may not wound the feelings of others or lead to injurious consequences in our own lives. "He is thoroughly bad, but I cannot help liking him," is a phrase which presents to us at once a great opportunity of helping another, and an equal danger of being led ourselves to accept standards and acquiesce in conduct against which both our reason and conscience protest. But when we dislike people after this fashion it is practically impossible to alter the feeling. We may do our duty to them, and suppress our repugnance, but the feeling itself is beyond our reach. It need hardly be said that it was not of this faculty that our Lord was speaking when He commanded us to love our enemies, or, indeed, to love one another; we never could "like" our enemies, nor can we hope that things will so much improve in this world that we may come to like all our fellow men or all the members of the Church militant; our Lord in such exhortations is using another word which stands for something quite different.

The word *agapé*¹ is not without usage in English, even in its original form. It signifies that regard which we acquire for men or things by the study of their nature, by experience of their excellence, by observation of the ideals and results which are the substance and outcome of their character. In this, as we all know, first impressions are frequently reversed,

¹ ἀγαπᾶν.

and many things win a deep and permanent place in our hearts which we learned only by gradual and slow degrees to understand and appreciate. This is the love of which the Scriptures speak. Yet we must observe that it has its root and its starting-point in that natural affection which we first described: "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual."¹ Let no one suppose that he has not these primary seeds within his heart. We have seen that the germs of a natural love for God exist in the heart of every one, and we must add that the rudiments of philanthropy are to be found in every personality, however much selfishness or covetousness may have frozen it down to the roots. From this faint beginning, this "liking" for a few of our fellow men, a process must be initiated which shall expand into a whole-hearted *agapé* towards God and man. We may begin by giving a cup of cold water as a mere act of natural kindness to some one towards whom our natural sympathies go forth; we must proceed until there is added to that spontaneous impulse the love which gives it "in the name of a disciple," as an act of love to Christ, and to Christ manifested in man. We begin with the love of our brother, whom we have seen, and proceed to the love of God, whom we have not seen. So, then, these two kinds of affection are related to each other as the root is related to the flower. A devotion to God which has not its origin in natural affection, in philanthropy, is as a plant which has no sufficient root. We feel

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 46.

instinctively that a religious life which is severed from the love and service of our fellow men is a forced, unreal, and, as it were, hothouse religion ; yet a philanthropy which is content to work within the earthly limits of natural affection, and does not grow up into *agapé*, degenerates into a mere serving of tables, and contains no elements of eternal significance.

If, then, the love of God and of His law can be acquired, we need to know the method by which such results may be obtained. It is not enough to wish for it, or even to pray for it, though both these acts are necessary. The Psalmist declares that a regular study of the law formed at once the means by which he came to love it, and the evidence that his love was genuine. "All the day long is my study in it." "All the day long"—it sounds impossible ; the enthusiastic exclamation of some frenzied recluse who has renounced in the cloister all the ordinary claims and duties of life. The man immersed in business cares abroad and in family responsibilities at home ; the mother oppressed with the unceasing anxiety of making narrow means suffice ; the politician distracted with the clashing of interests, the claims of principle, the limitations of party ; the professional man exhausted and absorbed in mental effort ;—all these, when they read this quiet assertion, "all the day long," must feel inclined to lay the book on one side, as having no message for them ; later on, perhaps, when the imperative claims of life relax their hold, this quiet attitude of study and meditation may be possible for them, but as things are it is only a dream.

Yet as we look through the Psalm we become aware that the writer, whoever he was, was certainly no recluse. It is evident that his life was a strenuous one, and that he was intensely occupied with all the work and responsibilities which most men have to face; indeed, the glimpses of him which emerge through his Psalm exhibit him as being exceptionally preoccupied with business and personal cares. We see him engaged in political affairs, and having a share in the business of the State. He strives to guide parties and factions, and steels and stiffens himself against opposition and calumny. He has to deal with personal enemies and detractors, and to endure frequent misunderstanding and misrepresentation of his motives. He has great anxieties which come closer to him than cares of State or vicissitudes of business; within the area of domestic life there is trouble, effort, disappointment, and appeal. It is assuredly no narrow or sheltered life which we are contemplating here.

Such a man, using such a phrase, teaches us *to make time for the things of God*. He meditates not only in the evening or at night, when most men are freer from the world, but in the daytime, when the full pressure of work is upon him. Many of us meet the demands of our spiritual life with the easy and self-confident phrase, "I have not time," as though time and opportunity are things to be provided for us and thrust upon us in spite of ourselves. Whatever pursuit we may think worth while to undertake we must make time for. Can we recall a single employment for which we have not had to put aside resolutely other

claims, to make sacrifices of other invitations, to turn our backs upon people who wanted us and even upon duties which we held to be subordinate to the matter in hand? It may be that a free hour does come to us unexpectedly sometimes, but when it comes it usually finds us wholly unprepared to use it, and is frittered away, or idled away, in consequence. For some reason or another, such accidental moments of freedom are not very often occupied with our study of the law of the Lord; indeed, these occasional vacant hours have no relation to the general programme of our lives; to rely upon them is futile, first, because they so seldom come, and secondly, because they take us by surprise and we are totally unable to use them advantageously. The life and needs of our spiritual nature must be deliberately provided for when we map out the engagements of each day.

As we face such a necessity we are compelled to realise what sort of value we assign to the study of the law of God. What other employment are we ready to postpone or abbreviate in order that we may be with God? It is to be feared that along that graduated scale of duties, of things which matter, which every one has more or less distinctly in his mind, the concerns of the soul not unfrequently occupy a somewhat low place. Suppose that we have a rule of attending a church service two or three times a week; consider how slight are the obstacles to which such a rule will yield—a letter to be written, a visit from an acquaintance, the last few pages of a book, are quite enough to interrupt our intention and to

turn our life into other channels. So we come to give God the scraps and fragments of our time. Well, He who when He entered on our life found no room for Him in the inn, He who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, He who said to the disciples, "Gather up the fragments which remain," does not reject or disdain even such offerings as these; but we dare not, we do not wish to, presume upon His infinite compassion and forbearance. No one having his eyes open to the meaning of his acts would treat his Creator with such gratuitous insolence as this. We owe it to His amazing love to us, to our own sense of reality and proportion towards Him, to settle deliberately and as in His sight what place and time shall be assigned in our lives to fellowship with Him; and having made such an appointment with our Maker, not to fail in keeping it—at least, for any less reason than would require us to give up an important engagement with our fellow men and send an apology for our absence.

This phrase of his, "all the day," speaks also of *the necessity of routine*. It has been said that the greatness of a nation depends upon its power of enduring monotony, and perhaps few people realise what strenuous and persistent drudgery forms the root of most successful lives. This is a quality which it is particularly difficult to exercise in our spiritual life, because in addition to the irksomeness of exercising it anywhere, there is the hindrance created by a widely-spread opinion that in religion it is not only useless but wicked. True religion, as many people understand

it, must be absolutely impulsive and spasmodic. They refer to all those descriptions in Scripture which unfold the freedom of the operations of the Holy Spirit, and which assert that those who are born of the Spirit are endowed with the same untrammelled liberty. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one who is born of the Spirit."¹ "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."² This does not mean, however, that man must wait for sudden gusts of spiritual influence to sweep him into communion with God. It means that the life of a man who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit is not confined by the bonds of his sins or the limits of his circumstances, but that there is a power from God which we can neither measure nor control which opens to every human soul unbounded possibilities. It tells the man who is weighed down with the burden of hereditary tendencies or personal sins that there is no reason to despair; it extends equality of opportunity to the life which has to be lived amid the degrading influences of a city slum and to that which can expand itself amid the open glories of nature or enjoys the gifts of a refined and cultivated sphere.

But wherever a man's lot may be cast, if he would have the assistance of this power, he must make the preparations and adjustments of his life which so great a gift demands. Elijah on Mount Carmel first endured a day of obloquy and reproach, then he laboriously rebuilt the altar of God; after that he prepared the

¹ S. John iii. 8.

² 2 Cor. iii. 17.

wood and laid the sacrifice upon it, and then, when he had done all that he had been taught to do, and when the appointed hour had come, he prayed.¹ Here was routine, physical and spiritual; but it was a routine which drew fire down from heaven. The Apostles were told to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. They waited accordingly, "in prayer and supplication," and at the hour which God had chosen the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them.² These are but conspicuous instances of that which is always necessary. It is well to face the fact that the routine and effort are likely to be much greater in proportion than we should be inclined to assume. The preparations in our Lord's life fill by far the greatest part of it, and behind the public ministry of most great men there is a quiet, obscure period of study, growth, and intensification, which in length of time and strain far surpasses the few years of achievement. Every moment of open vision must be purchased by such a period of tedious and exacting preparation. The Psalmist's phrase, "all the day long," includes, no doubt, days of spiritual exaltation, when the veil of the earthly law became transparent, and he saw through it the glory and the righteousness of God. But far more frequently it describes days of patient plodding along the narrow way, when the Divine light illuminated just the space he trod on, and all beyond it was discernible only to the eye of faith.

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 37.

² S. Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4, 12 ff.

“ We cannot kindle when we will
 The fire that in the heart resides ;
 The Spirit bloweth and is still,
 In mystery our soul abides :
 But tasks in hours of insight will'd
 Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.”

We must feel that this phrase suggests also *the absence of haste and the necessity of deliberate progress*. Our study of the law of God is one of the things which cannot be hurried. There are a good many undertakings which can be laid hold of strenuously and carried through with force and swiftness to a successful issue. But our fellowship with God is not one of these. “ He that believeth shall not make haste.” There is need of a quiet beginning in the morning, and a continual reference from time to time all day. Every one has some intervals ; the difficulty is to remember to use them. A pause between interviews, a lull in the tumult of voices, a break in the day's correspondence, the moment of turning from one engagement to another ; these are all opportunities which we must learn to use. It may be that we shall find a church open for two or three minutes of recollection. We can carry forward our love of the law of God all the day long by such pauses in the day's work ; and let no one suppose that his mind will thus be disastrously distracted from worldly tasks success in which demands concentration. The moments given to God will not disturb the sequence of our employments, they will renew and fortify our strength to do them with freshness and vigour. Many a man

fails to accomplish his aims to which he has brought a wearied brain and exhausted nerves, when a brief space spent apart with God would have recuperated his energies and restored his powers.

Assuredly the writer of this Psalm, examining into the factors of his strength and joy, found that the study of God's law had filled his heart with love, and then that love had stimulated him to the study. Here are elements of spiritual progress which are within the reach of all. No one can reasonably complain that his life is dead and cold towards God, that his purposes are feeble, and his aspirations intermittent and lukewarm. The remedy is in his own hands. The love of God has provided every necessary means whereby we may draw near to Him, and if, as we grow in years, we do not also grow in love and holiness, the responsibility for such a failure is not His, but ours.

CHAPTER III

THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, OUR DEFENCE AGAINST THE HOSTILE FORCES OF LIFE

“Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, for they are ever with me.”—Ps. cxix. 98.

It is the commandments of God and not our enemies which are said in this verse to be continually present. The statement, indeed, is true of both, but the writer is recalling here his determination, which we reviewed in the last chapter, to keep the law of God constantly before him, and he now proceeds to enumerate the benefits which result from such a perpetual recollectedness. Every one who endeavours to draw his life closer to God will immediately become aware of hindering and hostile forces surrounding him, the existence of which he may have never before suspected. It is only natural that they who drift with the stream should be unaware of the strength of the current; but when it is sought to forge a way up towards the fountain source of things, the power of the contrary movement is discerned. The Psalms represent in wonderful proportion the experiences of the human soul as it seeks for God, and it is only in keeping with their character as a

perfect mirror of such an endeavour that a considerable portion of them should be concerned with the foes and oppressors of the writers' lives. So intense is the struggle which is here depicted, that we cannot help feeling sometimes shocked and startled by the attitude which is assumed towards these enemies. It seems at times to be very far removed from the spirit which breathes through the New Testament. Here are men of great spiritual attainments, to whom the quality of mercy seems utterly foreign. The Psalms ring with their cries for vengeance, their shouts of triumph, their blood-thirsty demands for the destruction of their foes. The "Imprecatory" Psalms, as they are called, constitute a real difficulty and stumbling-block to many devout and thoughtful minds; but they fall into their place, though it must always be a sad and solemn place, when we consider their true character and purpose, and compare them with our own spiritual experiences.

First, it must be noticed that these expressions are never dictated by private vindictiveness or personal thirst for revenge. Those upon whom vengeance is called down are always, in the last resort, the enemies of God. The Hebrew Prophets and Psalmists had a vivid sense of the great conflict between right and wrong, between God and His enemies, and having ranged themselves decisively on God's side, His foes became theirs. Consequently the appalling invocations of vengeance in the Psalms represent the heart of man feeling after the principle of a Divine government in the world; they spring from a zeal for God's cause.

“Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee :
And am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee ?
Yea, I hate them right sore, *even as though they were mine enemies.*”

It was intolerable to these men, by whom God and His righteousness had been discovered to be the supreme purpose and unique salvation of the world, that any form of rebellion should be tolerated, or that any course of conduct contrary to His will should continue to prevail. It seemed to them to mean the triumph of evil, the submission of the world to the powers of misery and darkness, that opponents of God's law and word should be flourishing and unpunished. This is shown by the fact that the writers were always desirous to leave the vengeance in God's hands. There is never any thought of man undertaking it. They will point out the evil, implore and, indeed, demand that God should apply the remedy ; but they never seriously think of applying it themselves. They feel quite sure that the kingdom of God must come in judgment as well as in grace, that love, no less than justice, demands a final triumph of God ; and that it must be the part of all true believers to forward that end by a diligent leavening of public opinion and by strenuous prayer to God.

We must remember, also, that Israel had no clear revelation of a last judgment, in which the anomalies and injustices of life will be harmonised and overcome. It is possible that most of us owe to this conception, far more than we are aware of, our contented acquiescence in what seem to be the inevitable evils of life and

our quiet endurance of much that is in itself intolerable. It is the fashion in our time to regard the New Testament picture of the last judgment as in some respects a myth, and the future, as we see it, does not perhaps contain the crude, not to say volcanic, conception of the final consummation of all things which it held for our forefathers. It may not be a mere fancy to suspect that as that final catastrophe has become less definite in men's outlook, an increasing impatience and growing despair of present existing ills are to be observed in the public mind. If, indeed, it is true that when we have suffered a while we shall also be glorified together; if we believe that there shall be a great readjustment, when the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain, when we shall know the reason of this present mystery of evil, and shall acknowledge that it could not have been otherwise; if there is to be a day on which we shall justify the ways of the Lord, and all flesh see the glory of God, then we who believe in God can wait and endure; we can live with our judgment in suspense, and we can bear what we believe to be the process of good overpowering evil. To us, thus taught, it seems impious, uncharitable, and savage to cry for immediate penalties; the day of judgment is sufficient for our sense of justice and our immediate need. But the Israelite knew nothing of this; he had to cling, in the teeth of the facts before him, to his faith that God really governed the world in love and justice and power. For him every triumph and success of evil-doing was a difficulty to his faith, every wicked man

punished and overthrown was an evidence that God had the course of the world in His hand. We must not wonder at the alternations of triumph and despondency through which the Psalmist passed as he contemplated the shifting scene of life; rather we must be surprised that, with such slender evidence as the surface of life affords that there is such a thing as God's providential government of the world (if, indeed, this natural evidence is not all in the other direction), he should have been able to keep his faith in God uppermost, and to make it the principle upon which he addressed himself to a world in which evil seems to be mostly victorious.

We must also bear in mind that the Psalms are poetry, and that the Hebrew poet thinks concretely. His psychology of men and his conception of the nature of God are all expressed in terms of personal and physical fact. Laws, ideas, forces, and principles were only grasped as they were exhibited in individuals. The abstract expression of these has become intelligible to us, and we evade or soften the ruthlessness of natural processes and catastrophes when we speak of them in general terms; we forget, for the moment, that human lives and destinies are involved all the same. But the vivid imagination of the Hebrew poet was not content to speak vaguely of the forces and influences which operate in the recesses of nature; he saw the laws of nature as they appear in the foreground, and as they really are, with men and women and little children in their power. We may prefer, like the Greek tragedians, to keep the horrors of the

situation out of sight; the Hebrew brought it all upon the stage. It is, after all, a question of feeling; the facts are there, whether we present them in full view or keep them behind the scenes; perhaps it is wiser to face them after all.

If the Hebrew wrote and used these Psalms as one who was fighting on God's side and contending with His enemies in the holy war, still more is this the spirit in which they are recited in the Christian Church. Received by inheritance from the Old Covenant, the Psalms have always had a large place in the liturgical worship of the Church. But perhaps it is not always sufficiently understood in what attitude the Church on earth utters these words before the Eternal Throne. We are familiar with the description of the Church in the New Testament as being the Body of Christ; He is the head, the officials are the organs, individual Christians are the members, and the whole company of the faithful together forms His Body. This conception, which has been elaborated by S. Paul, must be regarded as much more than a metaphor and an illustration; it is the expression of a great spiritual fact. The Church represents the Person of Christ on earth. Her voice is His voice. Through her Sacraments there are offered perpetually to the world those privileges which were presented to a particular generation by His human Person. By touching Him when He was on earth men were healed in body and strengthened in soul. In the sacraments men may touch Him still.¹ There was a definite promise left to

¹ S. John xx. 17.

the Church: "The works which I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father."¹ It may be possible, it has been only too possible, for the Church to allow some of her powers and gifts to drop into desuetude, but it is not possible for her commission to be explained away so that it may coincide with her inadequate performances. In her capacity as the Body of Christ, the Church has to plead in His Name and Person, to offer intercession before God, as well as to plead with, and minister to, men. Our Lord desired that His Body upon earth should be associated with Him in the activities of His ascended life; indeed, it is His purpose that the Church should be the material agent through which He should act on earth towards men and towards God. Accordingly, He established the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, by which He should plead on earth, through the instrumentality of the Church, the efficacy of His Passion, which forms the perpetual ground of His intercession in heaven. Hence, in the Sacrament, He is said to be both Priest and Victim. It is not merely that the Church there offers Him; He, through the Church, offers Himself. It is the business of the Church to create the situation through which He may act, to provide the materials for His operation. Just so they were bidden, in the days of His Incarnate life on earth, to provide the five loaves, the ship, the colt, the upper chamber; and, having been so instructed, provided by their own initiative after His death, the precious ointment and the tomb for His burial.

¹ S. John xiv. 12.

Now, the recitation of the Psalms by the Church is part of her function as the Body of Christ on earth. She recites them before the Throne of Heaven in the Person of her Lord; if any private or individual thought is included as the Psalmody sweeps on, it comes in only as it may affect one who is a member of Christ's Body. The lips that shape the words are the lips of mortal men, the words themselves are those of the Spirit of God, the voice is the Voice of the Eternal Son saying on earth that which He is saying in heaven.

It may be said, however, that this is only to move the difficulty further back; to remove it, indeed, from the sphere of humanity, where it could be explained by our frailties and imperfections, and to assign it to the Godhead, where it must be faced upon its merits. There is sufficient truth in this to make it worth while for us to consider the nature of wrath and resentment, and especially their manifestation in the Person of Christ.

¹ It has been observed that in the presence of unrighteousness there are three possible attitudes—indifference, justice, and mercy—and unless we have some sufficient sense of the elements which make up these three attitudes there is danger of mistaking one for the other. Thus mercy not unfrequently wears the appearance of indifference, softness, or insensibility to the law of moral rectitude.

¹ For some suggestions and expressions here I am indebted to "Ecce Homo," Chaps. XIX.-XXI., where the whole subject is worked out at length; Plato, Rep. IV. xii. p. 435; Bishop Butler, Sermons VIII. and IX., on Resentment and Forgiveness.

Indifference, pure and simple, is intelligible enough : it is the state in which a man has no proper conception of the sanctions of right and wrong, and is unmoved and regardless concerning them unless they affect his person or convenience or those of his immediate relatives and friends. It belongs to a primitive and barbarous state of human development. The *Iliad* is often quoted as portraying such a standard of life ; but it is to be found, of course, existing somewhere in every generation. In the *Iliad* "the distinction between right and wrong is barely recognised, and the division of mankind into good and bad is not recognised at all. It has often been remarked that it contains no villain. The reason of this is not that the poet does not represent his characters as doing wicked deeds . . . but the feeling of moral indignation which has been so strong in later poets was in him so feeble that he is quite incapable of hating any of his characters for their crimes."

The sense of Justice represents the stage in which man has learned to feel indignation against wickedness and pity for those who suffer, but no consideration for the criminal. This attitude was produced by the power of written law, and it prevailed in the history of the world from the time when codified laws created a definite standard of right and wrong, until the era of our Lord's Incarnation. From Him the world learned the quality of mercy.

Mercy is pity and indignation combined ; it is Justice in its riper form when it has learned to include pity for the criminal along with indignation for the crime.

“There are occasions when the wise man who entertains this compound feeling will see fit to indulge the pity and suppress the indignation; there are other occasions when he will give way to the indignation and resist the impulses of pity, but he is not merciful unless he feels both. The man who cannot be angry cannot be merciful . . . Of the two feelings which go to compose mercy the indignation requires to be satisfied first. The first impulse raised by the sight of vice should be the impulse of opposition and hostility. . . . It is not mercy but treason against justice to relent towards vice so long as it is triumphant and insolent.” We see in the Gospels a certain section of the community on whom Christ looked with “anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts,”¹ and whom He denounced with what we must regard as unrestrained indignation. “One invective has been preserved, probably on account of the concentrated passion of indignation which breathes through it, and perhaps also because, more than anything else, it determined the Pharisaic party to lay their plot against His life.”² Christ early foresaw in what the quarrel would end, but He would not modify it because He would not restrain His anger. In this profound resentment He never wavered. It is the custom to say that Christ died forgiving His enemies. True, no doubt, it is that He held the forgiveness of private enemies to be among the first of duties; and He did forgive the personal insults and barbarities that were practised upon Him. But the Pharisees, whose crime was against the kingdom

¹ S. Mark iii. 5.

² See S. Matt. **xxiii.** 13 ff.

of God, the nation, and mankind, it does not appear that He ever forgave. The words in which He prayed for His executioners, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," seem to contain a distinct allusion to that other class of criminals who did know what they were doing, and who were therefore excluded from the scope of His prayer. "It is not to be supposed that, as a lover of men, He felt less pity for those whom He denounced when all the world admired them, than He did for those whose part He took when all the world disowned them. Indeed, His most passionate invective closes in that supreme lamentation over Jerusalem in which the saddest feelings of a sensitive patriot are so inimitably blended with that regal sense of personal greatness which pervades His whole life. He felt pity as well as anger, but He thought that the anger had a better right to be expressed." In fact, it had to be expressed until those who deserved it repented; for it was the only available force remaining to move them to repentance.

It seemed worth while to discuss the subject at some length, lest it should be supposed that Christianity is really the emasculate, sentimental thing it is sometimes represented to be. Because it has had a considerable effect in softening manners, because it has given a new prominence and dignity to woman, and because it has produced great examples of passive virtues, Christianity is sometimes represented as averse to strong passions, as making men excessively unwilling to inflict pain, as fostering a morbid, or at least a feminine tenderness. War, for example, and capital

punishment, are frequently denounced as unchristian because they involve circumstances of horror; and when the ardent champions of some great cause have declared that they would persevere, although it should be necessary to lay waste a continent or exterminate a nation, the resolution is stigmatised as shocking and unchristian. Shocking it may be, but not, therefore, unchristian. It is part of the truth that Christ came not only to bring peace on earth, but a sword.

So, then, when our Lord, being the Second Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity, utters these imprecations through the Psalms, we must not think of Him as of an angry man flushed with elementary indignation. He is the Priest or Herald standing upon the stairs of an altar draped in black, and pealing out to an assembled world the interdict of God. He is the Son of man still, as in the days of His flesh, "looking round"—not, indeed, upon a narrow circle in Galilee, but upon the vast throng of the enemies of God—"Looking round with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." And we—being members of His Body and instruments surrendered into His hands that He may through us accomplish His work and will—we make His attitude and His words our own.

But, however careful we must be not to translate these great words of condemnation into an expression of our private dislikes and personal animosities, we are to use them assuredly in arraying our nature against all those foes of ours who are also the enemies of our Lord. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but

against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”¹ The hostile forces of the spiritual world assault us no less than they assaulted Him, and it is a great help towards realising the true nature of the conflict to be furnished with words which express it in terms of actual life. And here again the concrete form of Hebrew expression represents a practical truth as well as a poetic method; for the forces of evil as they assault us do head themselves up under definite persons, or systems, or nations; that is why we say in the Creed that our Lord “suffered under Pontius Pilate.” The Roman governor was not apparently the most guilty of all those who combined to compass our Lord’s death, but he held the key to the situation, and he opened the door. “It must needs be that the offence come, but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh.”² The world of evil must surge round our life, as the sea rolls its waves upon the low-country dykes; there is in every situation a custodian, one who holds the key, who can open the flood-gates and let in the sea if he chooses to do so. In this sense, each man holds the key of his own soul against all the forces of the spiritual world, good or evil; even our Lord cannot force the door, and says, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock”;³ but others may hold the key to the out-works, and when they yield to the behests of the hostile forces around us they become the deadly enemies of our souls.

¹ Eph. vi. 12.

² S. Matt. xviii. 7.

³ Rev. iii. 20.

The Psalmist says that the law of God makes us wiser than these enemies of whatever kind. Our Lord is seen to be constantly using it as the enemy assaulted Him. In His temptation by the devil the facts of revelation contained in the written word were triumphantly opposed by Him to His assailant. It was just the same when men came to entangle Him in His talk. A certain lawyer tempted Him, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"¹ "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" was the Saviour's response. "Ye do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God,"² He replied to clever casuists testing Him with perplexing problems. For our Lord was filled and saturated with the words of Scripture. They came automatically to His lips in time of need.

It may be the same with us. The peculiar strength which is thus offered to us is to be made "wiser," to be lifted out of range of the enemy. The constant habit of looking at the things of life from God's point of view, the impregnation of our souls with the principles upon which He works, the realisation of the values which He puts upon the various possessions and possibilities of life, make it more and more difficult for us to be really tempted by or through objects of lesser worth. With respect to a great many things this result has been achieved already. There are people to whom the grosser kinds of sin, and such acts as theft and lying, are practically impossible. In

¹ S. Luke x. 25.

² S. Matt. xxii. 29.

vain is the temptation offered to them ; their standards of life have put them beyond its reach. Not that any man dare say to himself that he is secure from any assault of whatever kind ; "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."¹ Still, humanly speaking, the grace of God, the acceptance of His valuation of life, the consolidation into habit and character of many victories over temptation—that is to say, a life lived in the light of revelation as it shines from the Word of God—does remove the soul of man from the range of the enemy, and we may gratefully acknowledge that fact.

But this acknowledgment points the way to progress. We may reasonably hope that, as we study the Word of God, what it calls "the fair beauty of the Lord" may so enchant and educate our minds that we may feel increasingly the vulgarity and worthlessness of the common allurements of the world. No one who has filled his mind with the forms and colours which glow on the walls of the Florentine galleries will want to surround himself with chromo lithographs ; nor will a man who has felt the restrained and homely splendour of Venetian palaces be dazzled by the magnificence of the most extravagant modern establishment. And as there dawns upon us the beauty of holiness and the glory of the life that is hid with Christ in God, the things of earth—and certainly those of its gifts, or such use of its gifts, as demand a lesser hope, a lower life, a meaner goal—grow shabby and insignificant ; they lose their power to entice. "I

¹ 1 Cor. x. 12.

count it all dross," said S. Paul, "that I may win Christ." The Apostle had seen in the Scriptures the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off; and we, with the same Scriptures in our hands, may have the same vision.

CHAPTER IV

THE HELP WHICH THE TESTIMONIES OF GOD BRING TO THE PURSUIT OF SCIENCE

“I have more understanding than my teachers : for Thy testimonies are my study.”—Ps. cxix. 99.

THE two great processes by which education is conducted are set out in this verse and the following one. The first and most obvious means of education is that which consists of instruction given to us by our fellow men, of the study of books, of the observation of nature, in short, of the activities of the intellect exercising itself upon materials supplied from without. The other instrument of education is not so directly an intellectual one : it consists of our experience of life ; the efforts, successes, and failures of our career ; the joys and the sorrows which fall to our lot ; the necessities and demands which the world lays upon us ; the gradual discernment of the characters of men and the laws of life which comes to us through the practical exigency of having to deal with both. The Psalmist declares as the result of his experience that the study of the Word of God, and a deliberate obedience to its precepts, are essential to any true and complete education ; nay more, that such a study and practice of the Divine law will carry

a man's training to a higher point than can be obtained by any purely secular pursuit of knowledge however complete, or by experience however prolonged.

He examines first how the Word of God can help, guide, and improve the education of the intellect.

We must observe here that the Psalmist claims to have acquired, through the law of God, more understanding, not more knowledge, than his teachers. "Understanding" means knowledge so balanced and harmonised that it explains and fits into the existing order of affairs; it is practical as opposed to theoretical; it is wisdom as contrasted with information.

We may go further and declare that knowledge is not only useless till it is thus brought into relation with life, but it cannot be knowledge in any true sense, because it cannot possess that element of certainty and assurance which distinguishes knowledge from speculation; until it has been verified and explained by practical reference to the conditions under which we live, it is like seed which has not yet been sown in the ground: we cannot be sure of its scope and powers, and it must itself remain unfruitful—a mere incubus requiring storage, but yielding no return—until it is planted in its proper soil. The accumulation of great masses of information must always be a preliminary to the development of science, yet this is the raw material of knowledge rather than knowledge itself. Such stores of learning may either be lost and dissipated in their unappropriated condition, or they may be drawn into the machinery of advancing science, and contribute permanently to its progress; but while they are

detached from life, and unrelated to it, they are simply waiting either alternative. We are all familiar with this undecisive stage of knowledge as it is exhibited in the case of very learned men who are totally unversed in practical affairs. The late Cecil Rhodes added something to the gaiety of the nations by declaring in his will that the learned members of a distinguished university were mere babes in practical matters, and quite incapable of managing a very large sum of money. Like many general and inclusive statements, his dogma was too unqualified. There are, of course, to say the least, remarkable exceptions to such a description. Nevertheless, he referred to a type, let us say at once, a distinguished type, of student which is happily well represented in English society, the type which supplies the undigested materials of science. Such men perform a necessary and noble service to the community, though it is to be feared that in most cases their only reward is that of posthumous fame.

We have all met barristers and physicians who are men of enormous learning, but have no practice; and we sometimes puzzle ourselves by thinking out how such an unfortunate result can happen, what quality it may be that is lacking, the want of which prevents their accumulated store of knowledge from being reckoned and used amongst the resources of their time. Their special knowledge burdens and paralyses them, they cannot get it into serviceable shape; it seems to master them, instead of their mastering it. Meanwhile men of lesser attainments use the materials which they supply and make it generally available.

All knowledge, in whatever department, may pass into this unusable condition. Theology is no exception to the rule. Not seldom we meet with people of vast theological erudition who are unable to make any use, or, indeed, to get any pleasure out of their intellectual possessions. Perhaps, however, when such a disaster happens in the sphere of theology, we are better able to catch a glimpse of its origin than in other tracts of study. It is noticeable that such amorphous learning has, for the most part, drifted away from living interests to dead things—dead languages, dead antiquities, dead precedents and customs. Such subjects have, of course, their message to us. We can count as wasted no pains and study, no concentration and enthusiasm, which may shed more light upon their meaning; yet it is quite an obvious and incontestable fact that it is possible for a human soul to be smothered into barrenness by absorbing slowly the accumulating materials of such researches pursued for their own sake. They not unfrequently lead men to such remote and far-fetched refinements that their knowledge has no “understanding,” and sounds silly, and even pernicious, to the world which they were sent to teach. One of the most learned priests of our communion ministered in an almost empty church. This might easily happen from a variety of causes; but one who was personally devoted to him, but could endure his ministrations no longer, gave as a reason for leaving the church that “they were always discovering something older.” Yet great advantages to the Church at large have accrued from these studies, though they were almost deadly on the scene of their origination.

The Psalmist, then, is commending the study of the Divine testimonies because it keeps a man's store of knowledge in touch with living interests; it prevents his erudition, of whatever kind, from becoming the barren and dead incubus which we have seen it may easily become. But what do we mean by living interests? We mean interests which are related to God; and we are brought face to face with this universal rule, that all knowledge, or science, as we call it, is detrimental which separates man from God, or does not lead man to God. The injury which it inflicts may be confined to the student himself. It is one of the painful and inexplicable facts of life, that the pursuit of science, in its widest sense, may overpower and destroy a human personality, and that the world at large may profit and grow fat on the accumulated *débris* of what seems to be a lost life. We speak here of lives which consciously separate themselves from the wisdom of God; of those who have deliberately eliminated all reference to Him from their life and work. But these are comparatively few. Most of the purely secular students, as we must call them for want of a better word, are men who have devoted themselves to the service of science and of humanity without any set purpose of excluding Divine elements from their thoughts and work. It may be that they have not learned much about religion, or may have been taught it in a form which is not mentally presentable. They find no help in it, but they make no denials; they devote themselves to what they know, and many of them have laid down their

lives in that service. We know that such an immolation comes under the Divine law of sacrifice, and that, however little the sense of self-oblation towards God may have entered into the consciousness of the worker, still, in those abysmal recesses of the soul of man into which no eye can penetrate, not even, perhaps, the eye of the man himself, the eye of God can see such germs and movements of the spirit of service and sacrifice as may bring the life within the meaning and benediction of the cross of Christ; it may be, within the reach of the martyr's crown. It is certain that the love of God will not allow the spirit of oblation, however obscured and over-powered by secondary aims, to fail of its reward.

But while we have this fact to fall back upon, there is a better fact to which we may reach up. The man who keeps his pursuit of knowledge in vital relation with the wisdom of God need fear no overwhelming accumulation of dead matter on his soul; his slowly growing treasures of knowledge will be vital and practical from first to last; they will enlarge his own life as well as minister to human progress; they will interpret to himself and other men the meaning of human existence, its problems and its demands; they will add, whatever be their special department, to the knowledge which men are acquiring of God Himself. This is what the Psalmist means by saying that his study of the Divine testimonies gives him more understanding than any purely secular education could possibly impart.

The distinction is so important, and has such special

usefulness for us at the present time, that it will be well to examine it further, as it is set out for us in Scripture itself. We will look at it as it is exhibited on the threshold both of Creation and Redemption, in the person of the First and of the Second Adam. It seems that this very problem formed part of the primary temptation of man. Whether the narrative be historical or not, there can be no question about its being revelation, philosophy, and prophecy, for it unfolds the situation in which each generation finds itself as clearly as if it were written afresh on the threshold of every age. Adam and Eve stood before the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and all the promises and possibilities of science and all the claims and restraints of religion danced together before their eyes. "Ye shall be as gods"; that was the offer, and that is the suggestion and incentive to this hour. The force of it lies greatly, perhaps we may say chiefly, in the fact that the promise contains a truth. Man was made in the image of God, and given dominion over the world, and therefore every instinct in his complex nature, and every element in his inherited traditions, go out in response to such a promise as this. The temptation reduces itself to a question of method. It suggests that we should seek for that which God would have us possess in such a manner as will separate us from Him. The restrictions which He has put upon the pursuit of knowledge seem for the moment unreasonable and unnecessary. "Perhaps, after all," says the human heart to itself, "the Creator did not say such things, or will not treat them as conditions of importance. In any case, to

act in disregard of them appears to offer a short cut to results."

The story portrays to us the principle which is behind the formula of the Psalmist, how that the tree of knowledge through misuse and disobedience may become an engine of death for us.

"Wisdom or understanding is a tree of life to those that lay hold upon her," but knowledge even of Divine things may serve only to reveal our nakedness. Science held apart from God will not preserve us; on the contrary, it may be turned against us; the very truth of God, if held without Him, becomes our worst punishment. Accordingly one of the saints when asked "What is the most dangerous heresy?" replied, "God's own truth held carnally or to exalt self." For His light may blind us as it blinded Nadab and Abihu; His ark may destroy us, as Uzzah; His sanctuary may smite us as Uzziah; His table may be our condemnation as at Corinth. Knowledge, whether secular or sacred, which makes us hide ourselves when we hear the voice of God calling to us in the cool of the evening, or which deadens the faculties of our souls so that we cannot hear His voice at all, is knowledge so limited and specialised as to be an injury rather than a boon.

If we look at the life of our Lord we see immediately that His knowledge differed in quality rather than in contents from the science of the time in which He lived. As a child in the Temple He astonished the Doctors with His questions and answers; and it is a constant feature of His teaching that those who heard it felt a sharp contrast between the quality of His

instructions and those of other teachers. "He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."¹ Again and again the multitude remarked upon the unique character of His words: "Never man spake like this man";² "as He spake these words many believed on Him."³ Now, a chief distinction, humanly speaking, which marked off our Lord's instructions from those of His contemporaries, was the presence in it of this very quality for which the Psalmist is pleading. His knowledge was of course held in unison with the Godhead, and consequently it was a living, luminous thing. It entered like leaven into the needs and perplexities of human life, and gave guidance and conviction wherever it penetrated. A painted window when the sun is set is nothing but a black and uninteresting mosaic of lead and glass. It is possible to explain to an observer that it really contains and expresses a subject which possesses much beauty and offers not a little instruction. By carefully tracing the lines of lead, some idea of the subject can be gained, or at any rate sufficient grounds for belief may be afforded that such a subject exists. This is what the scribes and Pharisees were doing. This is knowledge apart from God. But when the light of heaven falls upon it, the whole window glows and gleams with the truth which it contains. The greater part needs no further explanation. There is much which could never be realised by any explanation whatever. In the hands of our Lord Scripture and Nature were transparently

¹ S. Matt. vii. 29.

² S. John vii. 46.

³ S. John viii. 30.

beautiful like this; and so is the knowledge of every one who is taught by the Spirit.

But it is to be observed that this quality came into our Lord's teaching—humanly speaking—through His use of the Scriptures. If He is necessarily the supreme example of knowledge held close to God, He is also the primary witness to the Psalmist's method for so holding it. His human mind was literally steeped in the written Word. He was strangely proficient in it at twelve years of age. His teaching is entirely based on it. He used it as a natural resort in time of temptation; He made it His strength and stay in the hour of death.

The example of our Lord must be a sufficient sanction for any method which He used, but it may be helpful to look at other instances more closely akin to ourselves.

A touching illustration of it is seen in S. Timothy, who, as a very young man, was appointed by S. Paul to the difficult post of the Bishopric of Ephesus. What those difficulties were can be understood from the epistles in which S. Paul sent him counsel and advice. The young man has to govern a diocese full of silly and fanatical cliques professing doctrines very alien to the spirit of the Gospel; heresies had sprung up from mercenary motives, self-conceit, and immoral lives; there was quarrelling over charities; sponging upon the funds of the Church; stinginess on the part of the rich; formalism and worldliness amongst the devout; a partial rejection of the mission of the Bishop and of the teaching of the Apostle himself. Even the

complicated life of modern times could hardly present a greater tangle of conflicting schemes and pursuits, a more seething hot-bed of passion, ignorance, and conceit, all fermenting together. What need for tact, wisdom, and self-restraint. Yet, over all this, S. Paul places a comparatively young man, and the chief ground of his confidence in him is that Timothy has from a child known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation. The Apostle relies on that training so to cultivate the faculty of common sense that those who have had it will be able to guide and handle successfully the most difficult situations of life.

Perhaps a modern politician might do worse than saturate his mind with the law of God, in order to quicken his power of seeing to the heart of intricate situations, and finding the formula for their harmonisation. It may be said that this was the method of the Commonwealth. And so no doubt it was; but it was an extremely unintelligent and mechanical study of the letter, and was, in some ways, more allied to the method of those whom Christ condemned than to the method of Christ Himself. Yet, even so, there followed in the long run material, not to say spiritual, results, which have not worked out so badly for the country; if we can manage to keep the supremacy which was then established, we may be fairly well content. Or, if a man made such a study to be the inspiration of a commercial life, no doubt it might seem at first sight as if the Divine teaching could be nothing but a restriction and an encumbrance. Yet we have heard of

many merchants, notably Quakers, whose study was in God's law, and whose methods were taken from it, and some of them were not, to say the least of it, poor in this world's goods. Yet, here again, the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life: the achievements of the Quakers, however conspicuous, do not mark the highest point to which this method can conduct us. And must we say that science, technically so-called, will suffer by keeping in mind the revelation of the law? Is it not true that after the great discoveries of the sixties there followed a period of mere didactic sorting of materials, in which little fresh progress was made? The men of this period fiercely discarded the law of God as having no message for the modern world, and it is at least a coincidence that the tide of scientific progress slackened, and Scribes and Pharisees made mosaics with the materials which their predecessors had supplied. In more recent times there has been a change; those who are now engaged in these studies have been finding a way back to God, and once more the chariot of science has begun to go forward. At any rate, it is sufficiently clear that the period of the deliberate rejection of the testimonies of the Lord was a comparatively dead period in scientific investigations.

It is no narrow limitation, then, and no fanatical perverseness, which calls us to make the law of the Lord the centre of our intellectual activities. On the contrary, it is the experience of those who have tried it, and succeeded by it in every department of human effort, that we have here a light which will illuminate all our studies, which will reveal the heart of every

problem, which will shed its rays on the path of progress, and will broaden the horizon of possibility. Those who have it may trust it to the uttermost; they will sometimes be confronted with persons of greater attainments, whose knowledge of particular subjects may seem to conflict with the wisdom which they themselves have learned. But those who have understanding will be able to suspend their judgment while such details are being worked out, and until the new knowledge finds a place in revelation as a whole; it may come to nothing, or it may be a new aspect of truth; but in any case it is but an incident in that manifestation of God to the mind of man which He is making to those whose study is in His testimonies. Such certainly have more understanding than their teachers on the principle that the whole is greater than the part. To feed the soul on special studies isolated from God is to feed it on husks. To nourish it upon the law of the Lord is to feed it not only on the tree of knowledge, but also on the tree of life.

It remains for us to consider with respect to our study of the law of the Lord that it must be a progressive study. Jesus "increased in wisdom"¹ during that long time which He spent in the home at Nazareth in preparation for His work and ministry. He made progress there as He studied the law of God, and we must be prepared to find that our studies, if genuinely conducted, will lead to growth in knowledge and to advancement in practice. But with us the path of progress is not, as it was with Him, simple, clear, and direct. Any advancement we

¹ S. Luke ii. 52.

may make must be more like a zigzag, like a ship tacking against the wind. Human progress thus consists for the most part of a series of reactions. We can learn only one side of truth at a time, and while we are learning it we have to isolate it almost from every other truth, and from every other aspect of itself. The isolation may have to consist in vigorous denials of that which is actually true. The political history of England illustrates this necessity in every century. The place and use of authority has to be learned first, and the nation learns it under a practical despotism. When the national life is sufficiently consolidated by this discipline, the claims and privileges of liberty are learned by tumult, disorder, and revolution. It is just the same in the history of Literature. The beauties of style and expression are studied without reference to the sense, and then comes a period when the subject matter is thought to be the sole consideration; in good time there follows an age of synthesis, when the lessons received in isolation are harmonised and combined. The history of the Church has not moved on different lines from these; in the controversies concerning the Person of our Lord—to quote one example—at one time the reality of His Humanity was asserted to the obscuration of His Divinity, and at another His Divinity was exalted at the expense of His Humanity. Each of these extremes had to be separately expressed, discussed, and even tested in practice, before the mind of man could grasp the whole truth and understand the harmony which included the essence of both. We must be prepared to submit to

this manner of progress in our own development. As we look back upon our lives, if they exhibit any progress at all, it may be asserted, without much fear of contradiction, that we see them divided into periods, which are marked and filled with almost contradictory aspects of Divine knowledge and belief. It may be that we received our first lessons of religion in what is called the extreme Low Church school of thought. It is hardly possible that, if we have lived through fifty years, we have not found much to modify. Probably there have been periods in our lives when many beliefs which we held as certainties became doubtful, and shook and fell. No one, for example, holds, or can hold, precisely that view of Holy Scripture itself which was usual fifty years ago. In those days if men believed in the Scriptures at all, they believed in some mechanical process of inspiration by which every word was supposed to have been written by the immediate finger of God, and a miraculous history, chronology, astronomy, geology, and other sciences were provided for us. There may have been a period when these mistakes were being corrected during which we regarded the Scriptures as being the most inaccurate of books, and as not possessing even tolerable utility for the study of antiquity, let alone a Divine sanction for the government of present conduct. From such alterations those who are true-hearted emerge with new knowledge and new gifts. Or again, it is hardly possible that we should not have received new light upon the nature and claims of the Church and the privileges which it presents. There was an age when

the outward observances of the Church were desperately disorderly and mean; the buildings in ruin, the services infrequent and perfunctory, the sacraments almost obliterated from our devotional system. That was the age when the Church had to learn afresh the value of the individual soul, and of the unspeakable possibilities and responsibilities which confront it as it stands before God. It was hardly possible for men to learn or re-learn this side of truth if their minds were confused by the complementary aspect of it, which comprises the social duties and privileges offered through the Church and the sacraments. For, though it may be a poor estimate to hold of the capacities of the general mind, nothing is more certain than that it cannot learn two lessons at once.

We have emerged now into a period when the truths concerned with the corporate and social development of the soul have been pressed upon us for our study, and it may be that there are many who have been called to proceed in some quite opposite direction to that one along which they moved in early days: those days contain the image of loved and venerated teachers from whom all the most precious lessons of life and godliness have been received. For many, perhaps for most, a mother's face shines out of the shadows of the past, and every word of teaching spoken, and every example set, have a value—and ought to have a value—added to them which hallows and intensifies even the holiest lessons that the soul can receive. It seems impious and audacious to say, as we remember these, that anything, even our study

of the testimonies of the Lord, could make us wiser than such teachers, and in consequence it is not uncommon to hear people say, when they are confronted with some new aspect of truth, "What was good enough for my father, is good enough for me." Sometimes, of course, this is merely a cloak for the laziness which shrinks from the task of thinking things out, or that false kind of conservatism which refuses to recognise that we live in a world of change, or to believe that the Holy Spirit of God is leading us on to perfection. But most frequently it is that right and reverent affection for those whose images are vivid in the memory and the heart, as living far closer to God, far more consistently and strictly with what they held to be true, than may seem to be possible with any new notions, however plausible and forcible these may be. This is a right feeling, and one which is far too precious a strength and stay for the soul of man, to allow any serious person to disparage its value or its function. But it is only one aspect of truth, and it must be held under the general laws and conditions which govern life as a whole. Both we, and those who have gone before us, are expected to get more understanding. The lives which God continues on earth are prolonged for this very purpose that, by whatever indirect and zigzag route, they may progress in the knowledge of Him. To refuse to yield to this process, nay, to neglect to pursue it with energy, faith, effort, and prayer, is to commit high treason against our Maker: it is to go on living in obstinate resistance to the very purpose for which He keeps us alive. Moreover, those whom we have

loved and learned from, are themselves still learning in Paradise. We must not allow ourselves to rest in the current despair which depicts them as, at best, in a painless sleep. We know, indeed, very little in detail of the life beyond the grave, but we know, beyond any manner of question or doubt, that Paradise is a place of progress—there our Lord went to preach His own truth with His own lips, and thence arise intercessions for the struggle of the Church on earth and for the hastening of our Lord's kingdom. We know that on the far eternal shore we shall recognise and claim once more those who have been dear to us on earth; but what if they behind the veil have followed a law of progress which we on earth have rejected as unnecessary? What if they have gone forward to a perception of eternal truth to which we are total strangers? If you become wiser, in the sense of knowing more, than your teachers as you remember them to have been on earth, you are only keeping pace with their progress in Paradise, while you study earnestly and embrace devoutly such new aspects of truth as God is making known.

Further, we must remember that if progress is by the alternate study and use of opposites, we do not discard and trample upon all that we have learned in a former period when we enter upon another. In the very case which we have used as an illustration, those who have received an "evangelical" training have nothing to cast overboard as they sail along the course of Catholic truth. On the contrary, every positive truth which they have learned is required for their next stage of development. So entirely is this the

case that, now that we have a generation growing up which has not been trained in Puritan principles, many are beginning to feel that there is a serious want of necessary elements in the composition of our current religion, and are inquiring by what methods this essential foundation may be secured in the midst of the special lessons of our time. It is true, no doubt, that some things belonging to a former period will have to be discarded in every succeeding one. But it is not too much to say that these abandoned positions will always be found to be denials and negations: they never contain positive beliefs. A considerable amount of our religious knowledge consists of the denial that other people are right; it is in this sphere of thought that changes and eliminations have to be made. There is no particle of positive truth, no fact which has proved to have a value in our religious experience, which we may not, and must not, carry forward in the treasury of our souls. All such truths are numbered amongst those few possessions which we shall take with us even through the grave and gate of death into the eternal order and the life of the world to come.

CHAPTER V

HOW THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD SURPASS THE TEACHING OF EXPERIENCE

"I am wiser than the aged: because I keep Thy commandments."
—Ps. cxix. 100.

THERE is a wisdom which can be gained by the process of growing old. It is necessary that the scholar should be attentive and observant, but the book that is studied is not any literary document, but the world of nature and of human life, and the teacher is the kind yet stern monitor Experience. Whatever advantages or disadvantages of book-learning a man may have, this volume of life is spread open before him; and if he applies himself to its lessons diligently he is certain to acquire an invaluable education. Thus we often find that countrymen and sailors, who have noticed carefully the changes of nature over a long period of years, are able to predict the weather with a precision which approaches to infallibility; they know nothing of cyclones and anti-cyclones; except for a few more obvious principles they would find it difficult to explain how they arrive at their results, but there enters into the formation of their opinion a vast number of minute observations which are the foundation of an

unconscious science. In the same way we may meet men of business who have had no opportunities of training at school after their early boyhood, some, indeed, who have had no schooling at all, who have been able nevertheless to build up vast commercial undertakings, the underlying principles of which imply a very considerable education.

This fact, which is illustrated by men's achievements in particular departments of life, is true of our experience of life as a whole. There is a knowledge of the world which is a necessary part of education. Without it, as we have already seen, the learning which is derived from books may be fruitless or even cumbersome. We speak of "a man of the world," meaning a man who excels in this kind of knowledge, and we are all aware of its essential character. A boy is sent to a public school to acquire this side of his education quite as much as to be trained in purely intellectual studies. He goes on to the University with the same end in view. We pride ourselves as a nation on the fact that our great schools and universities are qualified to impart this kind of training, and sometimes we compare with them unfavourably the educational system of other countries which is more concentrated than ours on the study of books. Yet the controversy constantly breaks out as to the balance and relationship between the two kinds of training. A good many persons feel, somewhat nervously, that books are too much neglected in our system, and that the discipline of life and experience, not to say athletics, occupies too large a place and too much time. But, on the whole, this controversy, which

blazes up at intervals, usually dies down into the feeling that the proportion between these two methods which is actually maintained is as near the standard of perfection as we can reasonably hope to arrive. Certainly there is an unmistakable difference between those who have been through this training of experience in their early years and those who have been shielded by a careful education under tutors at home; no one is unconscious of the gap which such a sheltered bringing-up leaves in character and knowledge, but perhaps it is not until we have to deal with people who have never had a public training that we realise its enormous value, and cease to regard it as a mere useful addition to education instead of being an education in itself. On a still wider scale we send young people out on their travels "to see the world," hoping that they will gain or perfect this kind of knowledge. It is this element in education to which the Psalmist refers when he speaks of the "wisdom of the aged."

Nevertheless, every one knows and feels instinctively that there is a bad side to this wisdom as well as a useful one. When we speak of a "man of the world" we feel that something has been lost as well as gained, that he has learned wickedness as well as goodness. The freshness of the spirit of man has gone, the innocence which was aware of goodness and holiness only has passed away. We may feel that the state of innocence involves too much simplicity. They say that a canary bred in a cage is done to death by other birds if it escapes from its shelter, and we reasonably fear that a young life which has been over-much

protected may be an easy prey to the forces with which it must some day deal. Nay, we feel even more that a life conscious of goodness only is not fully developed. Such natures may be charming for a while, but they are apt to be shallow, and in any case are rather to be regarded as beautiful ornaments in the world of human life than personalities which have a power and purpose to deal with the elements in the midst of which they stand. So, then, we regard the education of worldly experience as inevitable, but we face it with doubt and fear. How often have we seen parents standing on the shore of the sea of life, and launching with trembling hands and beating hearts the precious barque which they have treasured and watched and tended and prayed for all through its formative years. As they see it sail away to meet the gales and waves of life a new anxiety has come into their lives, a new intensity into their prayers, for they know the risks that are being run. Yet they do not hesitate to run them; they know also that there are greater risks in sheltering any longer the soul they love so much than in letting it go to learn its lessons in the world; they know that something must be sacrificed; they do not expect to find, and they do not find, the same fresh, simple soul come back to them that they sent out to be educated by experience. And the mother looks down into the depths of her child's eyes, searching the hidden things which lie below the impenetrable surface, and hopes and prays that the evil which must have penetrated his consciousness may not have entered into his soul.

Now the Psalmist seems to be suggesting, and in this he is in consonance with the general promises of Scripture, that there is a possibility of obtaining this knowledge of the world without being tainted by the evil.

Did any one ever know the world better than our Lord in His human person? Was there ever any one more practical? Think of His lessons in business methods. A great part of His teaching is drawn from the laws of commercial life. The king gave talents to his servants with the injunction to trade with them so that he might have his principal and interest. It is the language and business of the Stock Exchange. He could separate the evil from the good in the devious and complicated transactions of the unjust steward with a completeness to which city arbitration courts could never aspire. He settled practical problems of moral casuistry and the intricate relationship between a conquered State which was also a Church, and the Empire under which it existed, with a decisiveness which laid bare even to the average intelligence of the populace the subtle unreality which gnawed at the root of the established religion. He unfolded the false principles upon which the hierarchy of the nation rested their instruction and practice. There is so much in our Lord's teaching which is transcendent in its aims and principles, so many maxims which seem to us to be counsels of perfection, and which the ordinary man of the world sets quietly aside as impractical and impossible, that we need to remind ourselves that if ever there was a "man of the

world" it was the human person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It may be said, of course, that this was the result of His divine nature and knowledge; but it is impossible so to think of it. Whatever may be the truth of the relationship between His divinity and humanity, and in the last resort this is a mystery beyond our perceptions, it is clear that the human person of our Lord is exhibited to us as the perfection of humanity—a human nature developing itself under the laws and conditions of this limited life in which we live, and therefore setting an example to every one of us. To suppose that the Divine knowledge or will mitigated those conditions is to be getting within sight of the Docetic heresy which was emphatically condemned by the Church. That wisdom of our Lord, in which He increased and which included such a perfect knowledge of the world, was derived mainly from the study of the Word of God. This was the manual by which He interpreted life and experience, and the knowledge was received, we need not say, without any infection of the evil. The example of our Lord and the teaching of the Psalmist declare that such a result is possible. We may have the education of experience without the stain of evil. How is the line to be drawn?

In seeking an answer to this question we cannot do better than turn once more to the story which is given us of the origin of man in the opening chapters of Genesis. We have already seen how much light it throws upon the perplexities which are involved in the training of the intellect and in the pursuit of

knowledge pure and simple ; it also contains a suggestion according to which the education which comes from experience of the world may yet be free from the world's contamination.

And here it is only fair to set before our attention again what a wonderful witness it is to the authenticity of the narrative that most of the difficult questions of life become clearer when they are referred to it. The story of Adam and Eve claims to contain the germs of human history and to set out the first simple origins of this complex life of man. Whatever may be its scientific value, and it is possible that this may ultimately turn out to be greater than some people suppose, it certainly does seem to supply a key to the moral and spiritual perplexities which confuse the mind and bewilder the spirit looking out upon the life of our age.

All the fundamental elements of life as we know it stand grouped together in the Garden of Eden. Man is shown to us in the presence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil just as he stands face to face with the world to-day. In this position he possesses distinct instructions for the regulation of his conduct which claim to be, and which he believes to be, Divine. The world to deal with and the Word of God to guide us—it is precisely the position in which we ourselves stand. Let us recall the substance of the Divine instructions : “ Of every tree of the Garden thou mayest freely eat : but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it ; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”¹

¹ Gen. ii. 16, 17.

Nothing could be simpler or more explicit ; and we are not allowed to assume that those to whom these injunctions were given had any doubt as to the Divine sanction under which they had been received. Nor can we suppose that the authority of Scripture is itself called in question by the majority of Englishmen in our time. Whatever views they may have as to its character, and concerning particular difficulties and controversies about it, its claim to be the unique standard of conduct and sanction for morals is generally acknowledged in this country. In discussing, for example, the principles which must govern the laws of marriage, a text in Leviticus will be seriously discussed by average writers to the columns of newspapers as bearing decisively on the subject. A small section may regard some of its utterances as obsolete, but they are for ever explaining elaborately on historical and scientific grounds the reason for holding such an opinion. We may take it that the population of this country stands before the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with instructions in its hand which it knows to have come from God. But it does not follow that the instructions will be obeyed ; they were not obeyed in the first instance. The mind of man moves in strange and subtle ways towards the objects which it desires to possess, and it proceeds to deceive and blind itself before it deceives any one else. The treatment which God's commandments commonly receive at the hands of His creatures is wonderfully analysed in these opening chapters of human history. The woman first disparages the bounty of God and belittles the

largeness of His generosity: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden," she said, and exhibited in her utterance the first signs of a discontented mind by omitting the words "freely" and "every," which marked the largeness of the original permission. We cannot fail to notice that as she diminished the goodness of God, so she belittled His severity: "Lest ye die," was her description of the consequences: but "Ye shall surely die," had been the words in which those consequences were originally expressed. And yet in the same breath she exaggerated the strictness of God: concerning the forbidden fruit she quoted the commandment as being, "Ye shall not eat of it, *neither shall ye touch it*"; but the prohibition to refrain from touching it was her own invention. It would be difficult to imagine a more accurate description of the lines upon which the mind of man to this hour distorts the plain behests of Scripture as he tries to harmonise it, not with the world, but with the use which he wishes to make of the world.

God has never forbidden man to touch the world; on the contrary, he is to work at it, to examine and study it, to employ all his senses, except one, and all the powers of his intellect in the investigation of it. It is man himself who, shrinking from the task and the risk of dealing fully with the opportunities set before him, invents restrictions and limitations which God has never required. Is it not easy to see that there may be objects which it is necessary for us to use and investigate, from the study of which immense contributions will be made to our progress, which nevertheless it would be dangerous or even deadly to taste, to absorb

into our nature, to admit within the sphere of our personality? Money is a thing which we must work for: it is part of the task and the duty set before us; but the love of money is the root of all evil, and the man who suffers his heart to conceive it has eaten of the forbidden fruit. The whole appeal which the material world makes to us comes under this law. We all know men and women who have allowed business, or society, or ambition, or money, or art, to get inside them. It is a kind of intoxication; it is the surrender of the government of their lives. As in the Eastern story certain supernatural beings became the slaves of the ring or the slaves of the lamp, so that they were constrained to do the bidding of whoever might possess those objects, so those who have tasted these forbidden fruits become the servitors of the things which they admit into their souls. Human in all things else, with faculties and possibilities in their nature which are supernatural, we see them nevertheless compelled to do the bidding of the earthly powers whose infection has permeated their being. The distinction is obvious between those who use the world as not abusing it, and those who use it as men who love it. This is the point at which utility passes into peril.

Our safeguard against such disaster consists in the Word of God. We need to accept it somewhat more simply than perhaps we do. Assuredly we must take great care that we do not explain it away. Few things have ever been so distorted and twisted, diminished and added to, altered by explanation, and explained away altogether, as the Word of God. It

may seem pedantic sometimes to be taking it too literally. We may easily be led into practical absurdities by insisting upon the etymological strictness of some of its commands; but we should, at least, remember that we are always embarking on a task of much difficulty and danger when we proceed, as we must proceed, to translate it into the language and circumstance of our own times. Even the mother of mankind failed most miserably to recall the real facts of the commandment when she stood in the presence of temptation. It is evident that a rough and ready attempt to give the general sense, and an easy-going indifference about exact phrases, may lead us far astray from the commandment which has actually been given. We see the process going on in newspapers, in Parliament, and even in Church, quite as distinctly as in the Garden of Eden. No one who has considered the subject will fail to recognise that the interpretation of the Scriptures is a matter of great perplexity. They are not written in the form of dogmatic articles and decrees; and yet they contain an exact and formal code by which we have to live. From the living presentment of general principles it is necessary for us to extract the code. It is at this point that the difficulty begins, and it is so great that many are tempted to feel that the Scriptures, after all, are too vast and vague for any sure guidance to be elicited from them. How can any one with the best intentions in the world be sure that his interpretation is not totally wrong? This is a reasonable question to ask, so reasonable that we may wonder that every one does

not ask it; that there are individuals who are content to shape their lives in accordance with their peculiar views on the chance of their private interpretation of Scripture being correct.

We have not, however, been left without sufficient help. We have a sure guide in the interpretation of Scripture by the Church. In a very large number of practical matters we have no need to think out the solution for ourselves from the general instructions of Scripture. As regards public worship, fasting, alms, the degrees within which marriage is permitted, our preparation for communion, the days which are specially to be emphasised, and many other things, the Church gives us explicit instruction out of the Word of God. When a man belongs to a denomination, his membership includes the belief that that denomination is, on the whole, the best interpreter of the sacred Scriptures which at present exists on the earth. It was Matthew Arnold who pointed out the spiritual wastefulness of thinking out for ourselves a great many topics of organisation, routine, propriety, and method, which were already decided by the Church. We have only a limited amount of time and strength. It is not superstition, it is only common sense, not to expend these possessions upon work which may properly be done for us.

No one in a civilised organisation makes his own clothes, or prepares his own food, or even, unless he is careless of risk as to his body or his property, prescribes his own medicine, or makes his own will; and it is absurd to suppose that in the concerns of the soul

everything must be personally made. It is pretty certain to be made badly if each man makes it for himself. An individual religion, gathered out of a private interpretation of the Bible, may, indeed, be sufficient to cover our nakedness, but it is certain to have all the grotesqueness of home-made clothes. "When they and their Bibles were alone together," said Hooker of some personalities of his time, "what strange fantastical opinion soever at any time entered into their heads, their use was to think the Spirit taught it them."¹ It is quite possible to recognise the good side of the personal interpretation of Scripture, and the necessity for appropriating its teaching individually, and yet to feel the confusion and despair which must follow if each man is to take the Bible and form his scheme of theology for himself. Browning, who could not fail to do justice to both sides of truth, has described the nemesis of "private judgment" with characteristic force when he speaks—

"Of the preaching man's immense stupidity,
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
To meet his audience's avidity.

You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling :
No sooner our friend had got an inkling
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,

* * * * *

Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
As to hug the book of books to pieces :
And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,
Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,

¹ "Eccles. Pol.," Preface.

Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt yours,—
 So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
 And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt."¹

The Church through which we receive the Scriptures is appointed also to expound and apply them for us, and its traditional course of interpretation has, in general, the same sanction as Scripture itself.² When, therefore, the Church is fulfilling its function of interpreting the Scriptures, and teaching us out of the Word of God, we have all the light which we need on our daily perplexities to enable us to walk in the way of God's commandments.

So, then, if we are asked, how can any one become a man of the world without being stained by the evil which is in it? we reply with the Psalmist that it is not necessary to taste and to feed upon the world in order to know it thoroughly: we have a sure guide and talisman to conduct us safely into the profoundest knowledge of it, namely, the commandments of God declared to us in the Scriptures and codified for us by the Church. Those who study the world under this guidance will be educated in the school of experience and yet delivered from the evil.

But we must notice that here it is the keeping of God's law and not merely the study of it which is relied on to produce this result. When the question

¹ "Christmas Eve," III.

² 2 Pet. i. 20. "No prophecy falls under private interpretation." The verse refers to the continuous interpretation of Scripture, not to its origination. The usual force of *γίνεται* here would require *ἐκ* to follow. See J. B. Mayor's elaborate note on the passage.

was that of the training of the mind, of the constituent elements of an intellectual education, the Psalmist set out the study of God's law as being supreme amongst all studies; yet even in the matter of mental progress pure and simple, we saw that a verification within the sphere of common experience was necessary in order to give clearness, certainty, and permanence to the truths which were received. But when we are considering the instruction which is received through the channel of experience, it is clear that the translation of the law into practice belongs to the very essence of the system. It will not help us here to be merely learned in the law; this will not save us from the contamination which is in the world; on the contrary, knowledge without obedience may open an avenue by which that contamination may spread more easily to the core of our spiritual life. And in any case those who study the law of God as an academic subject which exercises no authority in the government of their lives, get singularly little help even along the lines which they themselves pursue. For the Scriptures are not written to teach us astronomy, geology, archaeology, or chronology. These and other subjects enter into the sacred records incidentally, and if they are studied there within the limited area assigned to them, and in the subordinate place which they occupy, it is possible that the Bible may throw more light even upon these subjects than is usually supposed. To isolate the secondary topics of a book, and to treat them apart from the central interest which they are used to illustrate, as if they were separate treatises on a variety of subjects, is not a

very scientific method of interpretation. The Scriptures are written to teach us how to live; everything which they contain is subordinate to that purpose; the subsidiary topics, if viewed in relation to the central theme, will fall into their proper place, and not only will the statement of them in Scripture agree with the larger and independent study which they receive when each of them is made by science the central subject of examination, but also this presentment of them by Scripture in a particular relation will shed a light upon them which could not come from any other association; it will exhibit them from a point of view which their isolated treatment could never present. But this involves that all that is taught in Scripture should become the subject of experiment within the sphere of conduct. It is the habit in Germany, and the attempt is being made now and again in England, to study Christianity with the same personal aloofness with which we might study Moham-medanism, botany, or mechanical engineering. We must acknowledge at once that a great many facts concerning Christianity have been by such studies brought into view. But it is difficult to feel that Christianity has been in this way either used or advanced for the purposes for which it was established. If such speculations have borne fruit for those who have in this spirit given their lives to them, it has been in a region which the eye of man cannot penetrate and from which the light does not shine. We are not implying that these students have been wicked, but that they have not been "saintly" according to the

proportion of their learning. For every truth learned from Scripture claims the student's obedience, and demands under awful sanctions to be translated into life, practice, and effort; to study the Scriptures, and yet to stand aloof from the obedience of Christ is to incur a very grave responsibility.

We need, then, to set clearly before our minds how far we regard the law of God in the spirit of obedience. Perhaps we should be surprised if we examined our lives on the subject and enumerated those actions which we perform simply because we are told to do so in the Bible, to find how few they are. So large a portion of God's commandments coincides with our obvious self-interest, that half the time we imagine that we are obeying God when we are merely serving ourselves. Like Jehu,¹ during his revolution in Samaria, we say to our souls, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." But the zeal and the obedience extend only so far as assists in establishing the new dynasty, and when the question arises whether the people can be allowed to worship the true God, in His chosen place, in another kingdom with all the risk to the throne of pilgrimages to a rival's country, the idolatrous places are left standing, and the true God is set at naught. We want to know how we are in the habit of acting when the service of God ceases to be identical with our personal interests or even seems to be detrimental to them. Further, a great many of God's commandments are clear as to their purpose, reasonableness, and utility; we see in general how they work out, and in

¹ 2 Kings x. 16, 29.

submitting our lives to them, we are simply obeying those reasoned judgments which commend themselves to our intelligence. It is difficult to see how we could act otherwise; but we can hardly call it obedience. Our faith in any person, method, or institution does not begin till we act more or less blindly on their recommendation. The medical and legal profession are usually treated with this kind of confidence. But probably very few really treat the acknowledged commandments of God with this obedience and faith. Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Nothing could be simpler or more categorical. It is difficult to understand that any human being who regards Christ as Lord and Master should stand aloof from this particular act. Nevertheless, thousands of professing Christians do so. They ask why this command should be given, what purpose it is going to serve, which particular interpretation of it may be correct; and when they have obtained a sufficiently satisfactory explanation of these, and a good many similar inquiries, they may begin to obey. But such conformity is not obedience; it is pursuing one's ascertained interests.

The same thing is true of attendance at public worship. The question has been raised in our time, what is the good of it? Our forefathers never dreamt of asking such a question. It is alleged that they went in a spirit of routine and habit, and rendered an extremely unintelligent service, from which all true spiritual self-consciousness was deplorably absent. The truth is that they went in the spirit of obedience, and from the time when Adam and Eve left the garden

of Eden, and Samuel told Saul that to obey was better than sacrifice, it has been made clear in Scripture that no mere pursuit or exercise or even oblation of our inward and spiritual interests can take the place of doing what we are told to do, and doing it for the sole and sufficient reason that the commandment has gone forth. We need, then, to make sure that we do not merely use Holy Scripture as a work of reference, to find a justification, or further elucidation, of that concerning which we have already made up our minds, but that we are prepared to obey its behests when they are presented to us as simply things which must be done. Indeed, it would be a very useful thing to make sure that the scheme of our lives includes this element of genuine obedience, by sometimes practising duties which we do not understand, and which are not attractive to us, for the sole reason that they are plainly desired by God.

The promise given to such obedience is that it shall win a knowledge of the world without incurring its stain; and that this knowledge shall confer a practical capacity for dealing with the problems of life, for understanding men, for discerning the road of success, which shall far transcend the knowledge of those who have learned the mysteries of the world by tasting its fruits. No process of growing old in the service of the world can impart the knowledge which shall be swiftly acquired by keeping the commandments of God, for, as is said in the Book of Wisdom—

“Honourable old age is not that which standeth in length of time,

Nor is its measure given by number of years :
 But understanding is gray hairs unto men,
 And an undefiled life is ripe old age.

* * * * *

Being made perfect in a little while, he fulfilled long years.
 A righteous man that is dead shall condemn the ungodly that
 are living,
 And youth that is quickly perfected, the many years of an
 unrighteous man's old age."

There is nothing more repulsive and deplorable than an old age which has not grown old towards God. It is often a desolate and pitiable estate, from which all the furniture of life has fallen away. Public interests have ebbed from its point of view, and are being managed by younger men upon principles which are repugnant to it, or not understood. Social life is filled with strangers, and has become tedious and unsatisfying in proportion as the personality has become a social encumbrance. Amusements are out of the question; even passions and desires and the capacity for sin have departed: it is the ruin of an extinct volcano, which has created a desert around it, and has become a desolation itself. But there is also an old age which clings to all the pleasures and apparatus of life long after it is possible to enjoy them; wherein worldly qualities which, in middle life, ran parallel to the commandments of God, but were never identified with them, now stand out in their nakedness and isolation, without any dignity, or modification, or restraint from their momentary association with eternal principles. When wit has passed into smartness and bitterness, when carefulness has developed into meanness and covetousness,

geniality into silly effusiveness, self-respect into unlimited vanity; when the weight and authority which belongs to old age is expressed only in rudeness and selfishness; then, indeed, we are able to see what a horrible ending advancing years can bring to a life which has not been spent in keeping the commandments of God. We are all growing old; perhaps we do not sufficiently set it before us as an object in life, to grow old well. Such a benediction is within the reach of every one. In every estate of life there are beautiful lives to be seen, in which, as experience ripens, all those who have less of it seek quite naturally to avail themselves of its lessons; to which young men and young women delight to come and give their confidences and ask for advice; to which troubled souls and those that have gone astray turn for comfort in sorrow, and for guidance in the reconstruction of their lives. We all know old people who seem to be surrounded by the hopes and interests, the joys and employments of the younger generation; they are people who have learned the true knowledge of the world by keeping the commandments of God; their wisdom is not that of a particular set of people, or place in society, or moment of time; it is derived from the eternal source of all true and abiding knowledge, and it can never become antiquated or out of touch with the progress of mankind.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAW OF GOD, A SANCTION AND MOTIVE FOR SELF-DISCIPLINE

“I have refrained my feet from every evil way: that I may keep this law.”—Ps. cxix. 101.

It was a wonderful promise held out to us in the one hundredth verse, that we might have the knowledge of the world without its contamination. But the condition attached to the promise seemed to put it beyond our reach—the keeping of God’s commandments: here is the whole difficulty of life. Any one can study them; can any one hope to keep them? The Psalmist acknowledges the difficulty, and devotes this verse to its solution.

It must be observed that his teaching here goes considerably beyond the other instructions which the stanza contains. In them he is speaking of a personal relationship to God and a practical attitude towards His commandments. Here he is enunciating a system of discipline, a life of self-government, which is to be the means—one might almost say, the price to be paid—for the attainment of those advantages. It is one thing to receive illuminating suggestions from a teacher, it is quite another to comply with his demand that we

should shape our lives in obedience to the rules which he is laying down. At this point the world is apt to inquire afresh into the prerogatives and qualifications of a person who makes such a demand, and it is all the more necessary that we should give the question some attention here, because the claim of Israel to be the moral teacher of the world has for many years been allowed amongst ourselves to rest on an inadequate basis, and the method of the Scriptures in imparting such instruction has somewhat fallen into contempt.

It is generally acknowledged that the Hebrew nation was supreme in the ancient world in the keeping of God's law. It is, however, popularly supposed that this position was conferred upon them by an absolute decree of Heaven, by which, like mere passive instruments, or even in spite of themselves, they were used as a mechanical channel for the revelation of religion to the world. It is not too much to say that those who acknowledge their prerogative, and those who reject it, agree too frequently in this account of its origin. But in truth every step of their progress towards their unique position in the hierarchy of the nations was accompanied by moral effort on their part, and every word of their teaching is drawn from personal experience. It is an error to regard them, in the way we have described, as being the special favourites of Heaven. Heaven has no favourites in the sense in which modern individualism has interpreted the operations of the Almighty. We inherit from Calvin terrible misconceptions of God's attitude towards humanity, by which the exercise of

the Divine power is described as an arbitrary and capricious force, annihilating the freedom of the individual will, while preserving its responsibility. To push the misconception back and trace it to its origin, we feel bound to say that S. Augustine, in the necessary reaction from the heresy which represented man's activities as being wholly independent of God's grace, laid down limitations of human freedom which need to be studied with caution; nay, S. Paul himself,¹ while asserting the supremacy of the Divine will, said "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction,"² and there is plenty of excuse for a student like Calvin arriving at one-sided and ill-balanced conclusions, however much we may regret the disastrous consequences which have followed from the adoption of those conclusions by half the civilised world.

It is a correct statement of one side of the truth to say that God chose Israel to Himself. He initiates the movements of grace and life; but He does so in the same sense in which He sets in motion the powers of pain and retribution. There go out from the Godhead certain forces which are the expression of His Being, and which we have come to call laws. Those who keep themselves in harmony with these forces find them full of life, help, and beneficence. But if a man sets his life in opposition to them, they become to him the instruments of suffering and destruction. This is what is meant when we are told that "the Spirit of the

¹ Rom. viii.

² 2 Pet. iii. 16.

Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.”¹ The change was in the attitude of Saul, not in the character of the force. The east wind is a help to the man who is travelling with it, but if he turns and goes in the opposite direction it immediately becomes a hindrance. We are specially taught that this fact is true even of that remedial force of atonement and redemption, which goes forth from the Deity to the world, the generation of which within the Godhead we have been permitted to see in the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Gospel itself is “to some a savour from death unto death, and to others a savour from life unto life.”² There can be no question as to its intention and purpose, yet even the force of Divine mercy is turned into a destroying power for those who neglect or refuse to adjust their lives to its movements and its demands.

Now, Israel was the nation which above all others conformed itself to the moral law of God, and on this account learned more about it than any other nation. Great as were the discipline and education which the Hebrews received from Jehovah, we are not to think of them as a kind of seminarist pupil, caught young and isolated, whose training stifled and excluded the exercise of any deliberate choice. The call of God, the opportunity to serve Him, came equally and alike to all nations of the earth; the Hebrews were those who pre-eminently obeyed the call. S. Paul, who, more than any other writer in the New Testament, indicates the

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 14.

² 2 Cor. ii. 16.

relation between natural and revealed religion, makes this fact quite clear. In Rom. i. 17-21, he declares that the knowledge of God was sufficiently offered to all, but that the Gentile nations turned their backs upon the offer (vers. 21-28), and through this apostasy lost the highest life and knowledge. The Hebrews cleansed their hearts as no other nation did, and so they received a unique vision of God. This fact, the result of which is generally recognised, is sometimes described by saying that they had a genius for religion, as the Greeks had for art, and the Romans had for law. But, however it may be expressed, it justly describes them as the most competent teachers of religion which the world has ever seen. Only let it be understood that our acceptance of them as authoritative teachers does not rest solely on some doctrine of their election, or some theory of their inspiration, but is the acknowledgment of the result which may reasonably be expected to follow from centuries of national experience concentrated on a particular subject. Accordingly, when the question is asked, "How can one keep the commandments of God?" whatever our theories about supernatural religion may be, we necessarily turn to them for guidance.

Such is the claim of Israel to speak with authority on questions which concern the moral life of man. It will be useful also to give a little consideration to the methods of instruction employed in the Scriptures, by which they teach us about the laws and movements of our inner life. Israel was the first, and perhaps the only, nation to make a popular analysis of the spiritual

and moral faculties of man. The picturesque psychology of the Hebrews enables the least educated person to discern and to watch the movements of his own soul, and to note the impulses and tendencies of his life, as he adjusts himself to the Divine law. Others have attempted such an exposition as part of various philosophical systems, and they have described the members and functions of our mental and spiritual organism in language which needs a special dictionary to understand, and which strives so hard to be thorough and profound that even with the aid of the dictionary it suggests rather than represents the ideas which it seeks to express. The philosophers frequently seem to be like men struggling with visions which they have not been able to focus; to be endeavouring to describe things which they have not clearly seen; they even remind us sometimes of a child who has taken too large a bite of bread and butter. But the Hebrew, with his habit of concrete thought, described the organs and operations of the soul by referring them to the members of the body through which they act. Such a method may seem to be excessively trivial and insufficient to those who have been accustomed to the verbiage of metaphysics. There are many who believe that nothing can be accurate which is not technical, or deep which is not obscure; they feel that if an exposition is popular in form, it cannot be scientific in essence. Yet the very consummation of art, literature, and philosophy is to express reality, so that a child can understand it. Obscurity indicates that the artist has not succeeded in mastering his

materials. It may be doubted whether we can really get nearer to the heart of things than we are admitted by the Hebrew method. Since we are called upon to use it so much, it will be well to elucidate it in some little detail.

For example, it would be difficult to imagine any clearer explanation of the power which the fascination of external things exercises upon the soul, than to speak of it as a force which enters into the secret recesses of our being through the eyes. "The woman saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes," and when S. John speaks of "the lust of the eyes," he is describing the same process. No amount of semi-chemical analysis of the grey matter of the brain, of solecistic Greek and Latin hybrids, or bald transliteration of German technicalities, can make the operation a whit more intelligible than it is made to us here. As a man lets his soul go out through his eyes to the attractions of time and sense, he opens an avenue along which those enticements creep back into the citadel of his life. No wonder that the Psalmist, with this truth before him, cries, "O turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity, and quicken me in Thy law."

Or again, he speaks of the accumulated results of a man's life as being the things which he collects and carries about with him. The hands are the point of contact between the individual and the world, the point at which the movements of his inner life pass into actuality and express themselves in fact. Moral philosophers endeavour to describe in abstract terms these tendencies and habits of the soul. The Psalmist

speaks of sinners, "in whose hands is wickedness, and their right hands are full of gifts"; and he describes the penitent as one who says, "I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord, and so will I go to Thine altar." Can we really discern any depths in the subject which his method of description does not make clear?

Once more: The avenues of expression through the lips and the tongue are used to describe the vague impulses which lie behind them, and it would be hard to explain them more thoroughly and simply in any other way. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips."

Our Lord employed the same method for describing the obscurer movements of the soul, and the manner in which they must be guided and disciplined: "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; if thine hand or thy foot offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee"; and throughout His teaching He evidently deemed it to be sufficient for all purposes of thought and life, that we should recognise our spiritual energies through the organs by which they act. Every capacity of our nature has each its special organ through which it expresses itself, and along which it receives impressions from without; "the five gateways of knowledge" are the only recognisable routes by which we have contact with the world, through which we go out to act upon it, and return laden with its merchandise; and the cleansing of our hearts, like the ancient civic life of Israel, is a process which is to be conducted mainly at the city gate. The exports and the imports are best examined

there, the evil which might infect us is there most easily detected; and there, following the counsels of the Psalmist and of our Lord Himself, we can—

“Crush it like a vice of blood
On the threshold of the mind.”

Thus, then, with all the sanctions of experience, and with the utmost simplicity of method, the Psalmist instructs us that if we would keep the commandments of God, *we must pursue the religious life in detail and in particular*; it is a fatal mistake to suppose that it will suffice to address ourselves to it in general and in outline. Such a vague and unconsidered spiritual life is often described by the phrase that a man “means well”; he has an excellent disposition in his heart, but it has never been consolidated and disciplined, nor developed and expressed by explicit attention to details. Our Lord continually taught us that this special study and exercise of our spiritual life belongs to the very essence of true religion; and the Church takes up His counsels and translates them into definite rules. It says “The way and means [to come holy and clean to the heavenly feast] is to examine your lives and consciences by the rule of God’s commandments; and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess yourselves to Almighty God with full purpose of amendment of life.”¹ It is to be feared that a very small section of the community ever does anything of the kind. Many desire and strive to stand

¹ Book of Common Prayer. First exhortation to Communion.

aloof from evil, but they do not take pains to refrain their feet from "every" evil way. Yet what would happen to a household or a business in which no accounts were kept, and no observation of particular transactions was thought to be necessary?

There is the less excuse for omitting this discipline that the method prescribed to us is sufficiently easy. We are not called upon to torture our souls by vague introspection into half-formed germs of desire, and obscure and incomplete oscillations of the will. We are to notice the matured activities of our life, and to remember that those definite manifestations of thought and conduct which rise to the surface have their roots in the soil. No psychological research is necessary; we may take it that the roots are there, if the fruits are there, and we must proceed to such decisive discipline as will eradicate the evil in its entirety. Every one of course does something of the kind when some passion or propensity develops suddenly into disproportionate growth and overshadows and threatens his existence. But we are not to wait until such a necessity forces itself on our notice; it may be too late then; we are to watch and search and examine all the time. Both repentance and love lose themselves in generalities; it is in particular, and often what seem to be trivial, expressions that they find life and reality. We often hear of people whose love for their nearest and dearest, embodied it may be in a life of devotion and sacrifice, fails altogether because it fails in little things. Assuredly the supreme love of God for man is expressed in detail as well as by a general

consummation. If He calls us to repent and exercise discipline at each of the city gates, at each of them He suffered and made atonement for us ; the cleansing power of His passion passed upon them one by one ;— they pierced His hands and His feet ; His eyes were closed in death ; His ears were assailed by mocking and insult ; His lips tasted the vinegar and the gall ; His heart was wounded by the spear. Our battle with evil, our penitence, our appropriation of the Lord's atonement, our love to Him for all that He has done for us, must include those particular attitudes of heart, those special acts which our complex nature requires, and which the atonement itself contains. It would assist our penitence and our love to be more definite if our devotions also were less vaguely general. Devotions to the sacred wounds and the sacred heart of Jesus are sometimes condemned as being the worship of a part of our Lord's Body ; and such expressions are often felt to be morbid as those which are contained in Sir Henry Baker's hymn—

“Oh joy all joys beyond,
To see the Lamb who died,
And count each sacred Wound
In Hands, and Feet, and Side.”

Assuredly we must not lose sight of Christ Himself as we contemplate one by one the elements of His atoning work, yet it has always been through the recognition of such elements that love and penitence have drawn nearest to Him. He accepted the woman who anointed His head ; who washed His feet with her tears, and kissed them and wiped them with her hair. He

invited S. Thomas, in his moment of doubt, to regard His hands and His feet, and to thrust his finger into His side. He praised the Mary who sat at His feet and heard His word. He blessed the one who clung to His feet and there poured out her soul. He suffered the disciple whom He loved to lay his head upon His bosom as He sat at meat. Indeed, He contrasted all these particular acts of devotion with the restrained generalities of Simon the Pharisee, whose reverence did not think it worth while to express itself in detail, and therefore fell sadly short of what was due on the whole. "Thou gavest me no water for my feet; my head with oil thou didst not anoint; thou gavest me no kiss." Something which corresponds definitely to this must enter into every successful spiritual life, and the Psalmist showed himself to be fully aware of it when he "refrained his feet from 'every' evil way."

The word "refrained" reminds us that *we are naturally borne to evil by our feet*. It is not so much that evil things come to us; no doubt they do, and we must be prepared for their assault and fascination. But most frequently when we imagine that temptations are pressing upon us, we are really gravitating towards them: we are carried along by the inherent tendencies of our nature into places, company, and atmospheres which are evil and dangerous to our souls. The man who has never watched his conduct and realised his weakness in detail, is usually under the impression that he can go anywhere, into places of whatever character, without personal risk. It is a curious side of our individual self-confidence that we are often

nervous about the power of evil associations for others ; few men dread it for themselves. Somehow we feel that any one else may be taken by surprise and slip into moral failure, but we imagine that we know ourselves so well and have our life so completely in hand that it would be impossible for us to go too far. It is, of course, a vain delusion, as most men know to their cost, but not very often to their instruction. There is no man whose character is so pure or so strong that he can venture himself rashly into the haunts and homes of temptation.

The Hebrew word for "refrained" indicates that *the effort of restraint must be a strenuous one*. It might be rendered, "I have fettered or imprisoned my feet," whereby we understand what severe effort is necessary to keep them from leading us astray ; for every human personality has in it some portion of the forces which overwhelmed the life of the man named "Legion," "who had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been rent asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces,"¹ and his feet had carried him into a living death, where he became a man alive to the existence of this world, but already dwelling amongst the tombs.

In addition to diligent effort, this process of restraint demands continual trouble and painstaking attention. A man who had the craving for alcohol upon him, and to whom its very odour had intense power of allure-ment, used to save himself on his way home from work by crossing the road every time he had to pass

¹ S. Mark v. 4.

a public-house. There were some parts of the journey along which he had to proceed by a route absolutely zigzag, and there were one or two spots which he called Scylla and Charybdis, when he had to make a dash for it, with the temptation on both sides. It may seem to have been an unnecessary and extravagant course to take in order to secure immunity, and many people would regard it as sheer fanaticism. Yet, how frequently do people with a bad cold, or an infected lung, take quite as much trouble themselves, and give a great deal more trouble to others, in order to keep out of a draught—"Please pull the window down; I am afraid of my lung, you know"—until carefulness becomes a second nature, a kind of pride and pleasure to them, and a necessity which is perfectly recognised by all their friends! It is only concerning the weaknesses of our moral being that we shrink from taking trouble, or are ashamed to be found exercising restrictions.

There are people, then, whom we must take pains to avoid, and places from which we must refrain our feet. We are not strong enough to expose ourselves to every influence, or to venture into every company. We must not go rashly, as S. Peter did, into places where our Lord is being put upon His trial, and where His enemies are assembled together to do injury and despite to His cause. On that memorable occasion, when an apostle fell so terribly, we read that they had "made a fire of coals, for it was cold, and warmed themselves, and Peter stood and warmed himself." So it is that Christians stand before the hearth of the world, and allow its genial satisfactions to envelop

their souls, and take warmth and illumination from the convenient fires which have been lighted, and are being used, by the enemies of Christ. The Psalmist bids us to turn away from all such opportunities, and to bring our cold hearts and frigid natures to the glowing altar of the Word of God.

Yet, of course, in the attempt to refrain our feet from every evil way we cannot always hope to succeed. The narrow way is difficult and often perplexing, and the devious paths which lead away from it are full of specious promises of greater expedition and less fatigue, and human nature is weak and easily led, and every fibre of it responds to suggestions of less labour and strain. Who will expect that frail humanity will not sometimes err in such circumstances as these? Certainly the Psalmist claims no such immunity from error for himself. The word "refrain" implies that he always made the effort; it does not suggest that he never failed in the attempt. It is clear, too, that our Lord who knows the uttermost of our weakness, does not expect impossible perfections from us, for He has Himself ordained means of restoration for those who have wandered out of the way.

He has shown us how, as the Good Shepherd, He goes Himself after the wandering sheep. All through the darkness of that worldliness which we have chosen to enter, up the high mountains of pride and obstinacy which we have wilfully climbed, far away to the barren fields to which our passions and desires have led us, does the tender Shepherd, with tears and bleeding feet, seek the wanderer whom He loves.

We recognise this picture as fulfilled in history by the ministry of our Lord in the Holy Land. We must recognise it also as it is fulfilled continuously for every successive generation in the ministries of the Church. Unless we believe that Christ is actually and personally in His Church, extending to each age and period of the world the blessings which we read about in the four Gospels, it is difficult to see what advantage it can be to us to read the Gospels at all. Why should we be tantalised with the story of His goodness in healing and feeding and helping the men who saw Him on earth if He does nothing of the kind for us? What justice can there be in demanding the same standard of service from us, who are left to ourselves, as from those who had the benefit of His presence? It is mockery to bid us to be content with the story of food which was actually given to them. In vain do men cover the emptiness of their symbolical system by the sacred name of the Holy Spirit, and offer us, as suitable to His dispensation, a mere mirage of a gospel, which we grasp at in vain in this valley of tears. Either the substance of the four Gospels is reconstructed for the use of each generation, or it is not. If it is not so, Christianity is nothing but ancient history, not unmixed with mythical matter, as regards the past, and in the present a flimsy theosophy, in which facts are spiritualised until they mean anything or nothing, and metaphorical and figurative absurdities represent unsubstantial shadows which exist only in the kingdom of make-believe.

But our claim is that Christ does not simply use

the Church as a deputy, but that He is in His Church, doing personally at this moment precisely the things which He did in the days of His incarnate life. This is the real meaning of the Church's mission. It is Christ who is seeking His wandering sheep when His Church goes out to crowded street and stifling slum. It is Christ who utters the promises and warnings which sound continually from the altar. He it is who takes the little ones in His arms as His Church receives them in Baptism. It is His own Body and Blood, and no empty symbol of a distant incident, which He gives to His people in the sacrament of His love. Herein we have the exact equivalents of the privileges of those who saw Him in the flesh. They, like us, had to discern Him by faith. It was just as hard for them to recognise the voice of God in the words of the carpenter's Son, whose father and mother they knew, and whose brethren and sisters were with them, as it is for us to recognise that same voice in the counsels of a society enveloped in the commonplace. It is just as easy for us to discern the living Christ under the form of bread and wine, as it was for the shepherds and the Magi to behold Him in the humble Babe lying in a manger. They did not nourish their souls with metaphors when they stood before the Babe, the carpenter, and the cross ; and neither need we when we find ourselves in the presence of the Church, the font, and the altar.

But not only is He perpetually occupied in saving the wandering feet ; He is also exerting His goodness continually in cleansing their defilements. There

was an hour, the night before He suffered, when having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end; and supper being ended, He rose and laid aside His garment, and took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet; Jesus saith unto him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.¹ We know that this bath of which He spoke, by which the whole of our sinful nature is washed once for all by His grace, is preserved and continued to us in Holy Baptism. But we, like those first disciples, cannot hope to keep our robe unspotted or our feet unsoiled as we make the journey of life. Does He wash our feet for us, or must we be satisfied to read about His goodness to them? Must we be content with some forced and flimsy spiritualisation of the story by which our hearts are tricked into acquiescence while our feet remain uncleansed? If, as we believe, Christ is now in His Church, doing those acts of love and mercy which He did in the Holy Land, it is the reality which is freely offered to us. The absolution spoken by the lips of the Church professes to give us the cleansing of the stains contracted by the way. Every one knows with what great urgency and frequency the Church addresses herself to this ministration. It is offered at every public service, and in the

¹ S. John xiii. 1 ff.

Visitation of the Sick. We utterly miss its intention and power if we hear it as a mere recital of general facts which no one denies. When your little child falls down and hurts itself, it is not much help, it is sheer mockery, to be reminded of the laws of gravitation; if the power of alcohol has seized hold of some one you love, you do not desire to hear an elaborate account of the relations of cause and effect. And when we sin, and bring our travel-stained feet to the foot of the altar, it is heartless irony, or stupid routine, to be told of vague universal conditions, which may be exceedingly true in themselves, but which have no specific reference to us. But the Lord who lives and works in His Church does not thus offer a stone to those who are craving for help. When the Absolution is said, then once more that Divine and gracious Saviour girds Himself with a towel and takes a basin and washes the disciples' feet. No one else can wash them; but the cleansing performed here, and performed by Christ Himself, is a substantial reality and no metaphorical make-believe. The Psalmist, and those who journey with him, know where to bring the stains which betray their wanderings. With simple and complete acknowledgment of error and self-will; denying nothing, concealing nothing, excusing nothing; with renewed determination to keep within the narrow way, the poor heart creeps to the Saviour, ever present in His Church, and says—

“Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, Whose Blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.”

CHAPTER VII

HOW THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE OUR STRENGTH IN SUFFERING

"I have not shrunk from Thy judgments : for Thou teachest me."—Ps. cxix. 102.

WE cannot fail to notice that all through this great Psalm the law of God is called by different names ; in this particular stanza it is described as law, commandments, testimonies, words, judgments. There are, in fact, ten such names used throughout the Psalm. Each of these presents a particular aspect of the law which has been revealed to us, and describes one of the special purposes which it is intended to effect in the education of man.

The word "judgment," which is used in this verse, means strictly "a judicial decision." It includes in its significance the power that belongs to such a decision of establishing a precedent, which, from the time of its publication, becomes itself a law. But the phraseology and customs of the courts of law are here used to express something deeper than they themselves embody in actual use. The judgment of a magistrate interprets the existing law, and this interpretation becomes a law itself governing cases in the future. The judgments of God

operate in the same way in effect, but they are more than interpretations; they are revelations of laws which have been going on all the time, but are now clearly brought into sight. Before their manifestation a man might disobey them and be without guilt, because of his ignorance,¹ but he would have to reckon all the same with the consequences of resisting these laws of the universe, which are in existence and operation whether they are understood or not. The progressive revelation of the Law of God cannot therefore be regarded as creating additional restraints and limitations for man's life and liberty. For those who will adjust themselves to it, it means increase of safety, power, and freedom; but until a man has set his heart towards obedience and conformity, undoubtedly law, of whatever kind, seems a burden and hindrance, and even, sometimes, a cruelty; and inasmuch as there is always an element of disobedience in our nature, a part of our complex being which resents our allegiance to God, there is always visible to us in some measure the hard side of that law which is given to make us free.

It is this gradual unfolding of the law of which the Psalmist is speaking here. The "judgments" of God are His successive acts by which He discloses more and more fully the fundamental conditions of existence. They embrace, in the widest sense, His providential government of the world. They include those particular dealings of His, which we are taught to call chastisements; they comprise also the judgment passed on each man at his death, and the general judgment at

¹ S. Luke xxiii. 34.

the last day. From none of these did the Psalmist shrink, taught and fortified as he was by God Himself.

There was God's providential government of the world; we might be inclined to ask the question, why should he shrink from it? But we must remember that this settled order and arrangement of human life, which claims to exist by Divine appointment, was a continual puzzle and perplexity to him. He had the greatest difficulty in tracing the hand of a loving and yet all-ruling Creator in the course of human life. "My feet," he says, "were almost gone, my treadings had well-nigh slipt. And why? I was grieved at the wicked, I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity." The welfare of the wicked and the sufferings of the righteous formed a chief trial of faith to these early believers in God. We cannot wonder at it; we could hardly be surprised if it had even thrown them back into positive atheism. All that they had learned about the justice and love of God was far distantly removed from the existing order of nature, in which neither justice nor love are traceable. If the whole account of the judgments of God is that which the course of human life exhibits on its surface, a man might be well excused for shrinking from it.

The difficulty remains for us. But whether it is that apostasy has cut the Gordian knot, or that selfishness has increased, or that the light which God has shed upon the mystery from the Cross of Christ has shined and spread even in hearts which do not own the Saviour's claims, we certainly disturb ourselves

less about it, as a whole, than did the generation from which this Psalm emerged.

Yet the problem stands before us with all its terrible implications of injustice and cruelty torturing and rewarding human lives, not only without any consideration of love, but apparently according to no principle of reason. Think of the thousands who are at this hour in hunger, pain, and anxiety. There are so many who have obviously earned distress, and brought misery on themselves, that we use them as a shaded glass to protect our eyes when we are compelled to look at this vast seething mass of human wretchedness. But, if we are to weigh and measure the guilt of those who suffer, let any one ask his own conscience where he would be if he were to receive his exact deserts. And, in addition to this, our moral sense refuses to believe that there is any sufficient proportion of just reward and punishment in the indescribable misery which is constant in the world. There are men, who have served God to the best of their knowledge, who are seeing their wives and children starve; sickness is torturing the good and the bad indiscriminately; grinding poverty and unspeakable pain fall to the lot of sincere servants of God.

On the other hand, we have before us whole multitudes of prosperous people, holden with pride and overwhelmed with cruelty, whose eyes swell with fatness, and who do whatsoever they lust. Iniquity, which just evades the law, and accumulates wealth by methods of sheer robbery, thrives and prospers, is received and honoured; covetousness and lust, like

some Juggernaut car, make their triumphant progress, consuming the bodies and souls of men; even the benefits of religion seem to be offered most plentifully to those who want them least.

Outside the sphere of human life the operations of nature are no less savage and unjust. Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes overwhelm the good and the bad in one catastrophe; there is no land of Goshen into which the servants of God are gathered, and where the plagues of nature do not operate; storm and tempest exhibit no moral element in their movements but smite down all alike. As we look at nature, where is the sign of a God who is said to be just, loving, and omnipotent? Poets may believe that they see a witness to some such ruling power in nature's calmer moods, in the lambent light and balmy air of spring and summer, in the quiet strength of the eternal hills; theologians have read their Christian prepossessions into some so-called "argument from design"; but such aspects of Nature are the exception rather than the rule; always, in some place or other, she is devouring human beings indiscriminately in some insensate overthrow. If the evidences of design bear any witness whatever, they testify to a world created and governed by some diabolical and satanic power. If this is the sole explanation of the judgments of God, we have every reason to shrink from them.

But it is quite a new light which meets us when we turn from the witness of human life and of nature, and study the problem in the pages of the Holy Scriptures. There we are not confronted by some

brief and momentary experience, or what seems to be some isolated disaster, but we are able to watch the progress of events through the whole course of history. The actual facts familiar to us are faithfully represented. There is no slurring over those great and appalling catastrophes which from time to time make our hearts stand still; there is no mitigation of the apparent injustice by which the wicked prosper and the righteous are cast down. The solution of the problem is not attained by obscuring any of its elements. But there we are able to trace God's purposes, to watch their progress, to lay our finger on their accomplishment. The primary origin of evil is not, indeed, made absolutely clear to us; it is in existence and operation when the story of human life begins. But we are enabled to see that God is dealing victoriously with it; that there is a plan, and that a beneficent plan, and if there are subordinate manifestations in life which seem to be able to set God at defiance, yet the development of His purposes is not overthrown; the issue is always in His hands, and the triumph of His will, and of those who have governed themselves by it, is absolutely assured. All this the Psalmist was able to learn from the Scriptures, and we can learn it also.

And yet this was not quite enough to satisfy him, and it is not nearly enough to satisfy us. Granted that God's providence starts with a beneficent purpose and ends by achieving it, there is still the cost of human life, loss, pain, and anguish in the interval. Who is responsible for the interval? It seems to be strangely

slurred over, or omitted, in the Scripture account of the great evolutionary processes by which the world came into being. "The evening and the morning were the first day"; but what storm and stress and agony and death filled up the space between those points! We know that God is "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending"; but is He also the God of this vast intervening tract of time, so soiled by failure, suffering, and woe? For those who had only the Old Testament to help them, the answer was wrapped up in prophecy, type, and ordinance, and was dimly discernible to the eye of faith looking into a glass darkly. We know that, however this disorder and disaster of Nature may have been initiated, God has subjected even the terrible side of it to His will and to His love. The catastrophes of the world may be the inevitable result of the creation of a being possessing freewill, since God Himself cannot make us free and not free at the same time; and freedom means the possibility of sin, and sin means the certainty of suffering. It may be that the creation of free creatures lay in the necessities of the Divine essence as it struggled into self-consciousness. These are guesses which men have made as they gazed into the primary mystery of the universe. But, whatever may be the ultimate truth concerning the origin of things, we know that the wild confusion of the interval has been grasped by His love and power: its terrors and disasters, and all its events and operations, have been made by Him to be "judgments"; to the people of God they come in the guise, not of accidents or punishments, but of chastisements;

while they act as destroying forces upon those who resist God, they have been made into means of loving correction to those who serve Him. "All things work together for good to them that love God." To such there cannot be a moment's pain which is useless or wasted, not a single pang need be something merely to be endured with patience till it is over; there is not a disappointment that does not offer a blessing, nor an anxiety which is not needed to make us what we fain would be. Indeed, we are allowed to have glimpses of a region in which this law extends and operates beyond the mere territory of human frailty. The Captain of our salvation is Himself declared "to have been made perfect by reason of the things which He suffered," and this seems to indicate, though we must be careful not to push it too far, that perfection itself must include the element of suffering; that there is a deepening of the personality which can only be accomplished by this means, a completion of experience which is only in this way effected. Certainly, in the human person of Christ the fruits of suffering have been gathered up into the Godhead itself, and it is becoming no longer possible for us to associate the work and manifestation of the Divine Son with the needs of redemption only. As we learn to contemplate the operations and purposes of God in the entirety of their revelation, we are becoming more aware than perhaps we used to be that the whole course and order of things—creation, redemption, and the restoration of all things—is but the necessary and inevitable expression of the Divine life itself. The Hebrews are

vaguely feeling after such a conception when they seem to attribute evil to God; they are aware of the inconsistency, but even at the risk of positing a new anomaly and perplexity, they feel the necessity of referring the whole sum of existence and every incident in it to the fountain-head of the Deity itself.

Whatever light this fact may shed upon the mysteries of the Godhead, unquestionably the manifestation of God in Christ must solve the problems of God's judgments for us. It faces the question, Why does not God, if He is loving and omnipotent, sweep aside all sin and misery in a moment and have done with it? It shows us that God cannot deal with the situation in this summary manner. It is by some eternal necessity that the painful road of the cross is the way for Him of accomplishing His judgments, and the way for us of laying hold of salvation. If it is true that He who hung upon the cross was the Second Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity, we have there God's answer to all these perplexities: Sin being in the world, pain and death must follow; but God does not stand aloof from this disaster and help to retrieve it from outside, He enters into it, and begins the restoration from within. The Incarnation and the Cross declare to us that God cares, and how much He cares. It is impossible that if all this weltering mass of pain could be avoided or stopped that God should have allowed it to begin, or should suffer it to go on for a second of time. He said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." There is some Divine impossibility by which the cup of suffering for Him and

for us can only be abolished by drinking it. But the Cross declares that the whole terrible situation includes the Godhead in its scope. Christ our Lord has emerged from the power of it, and those who are in Christ shall emerge in His train.

The Psalmist understood something of this answer by the explanation of Scripture and the typical suggestions of the ordinances. He says that when he "went into the sanctuary of God" the meaning of life became clear to him. He looked upon the altar, and the shew-bread, the incense and the ark, and in these anticipatory pictures of the deliverance wrought on Calvary, he caught a glimpse of God caring for the world and working for its redemption; through the law of sacrifice, which was familiar to him, he learned something of the restoration to be achieved by a life laid down, and he felt that as he brought his own life within the sheltering and sanctifying power of that law, and made it to be a sacrificial offering to God and man, he was entering within the scope and sphere of some supreme force which was transforming the sufferings and disasters of life into beneficent forces for progress. He was steering his barque on the flowing river into the movement of some all-embracing current, which was sweeping human life with its conflicting eddies, its local storms, its stately ships, its pleasure boats, its trawlers, its wrecks, and driftwood, onwards to the sea.

But that which the Psalmist thus saw dimly has been made open and clear to us. When he went into the sanctuary of God he saw symbolic gifts and ordinances which testified of something yet to come.

When we go into the sanctuary we see the crucifix, which carries our mind backward to that which has actually occurred; we see the altar, which reconstructs that revelation in our turn for us, making it a present reality in this hour of experience and trial in which we live, and assuring us of the permanency and power of this law of sacrifice which shall not cease "until His coming again." And these things which are shown to us, as to the Psalmist, in Divinely appointed symbol and ordinance, are explained to us, as to him, in the Word of God. The ordinance brings the revelation face to face with us, so that it is a thing which we can lay hold of now, in whatever circumstances we may stand, in whatever age or country we may live. In the Scriptures we are permitted to see the facts which the sacrament makes available for us, operating continuously through human history. We see all the pains and sorrows of life gathered into a law of sacrifice, through which, instead of limiting, grieving, and destroying those who suffer, they become agents to purify, to develop, to bring joy and peace. We see God Himself embracing this law, teaching us thereby that it is an inevitable and essential element in the highest perfection, and as He visibly enters into it we learn afresh to trust Him to the uttermost, and so far from shrinking from His judgments we make haste to bring all the vicissitudes of our life, our hopes, desires, ambitions, our pains and anxieties, our losses and sufferings, within the operation of its power, to be explained and overruled and made by it into ministers of blessing and progress. And so, knowing the fellowship

of His suffering, with awe and yet with confidence we enter as He has invited us to enter, into the very heart of this law as it is embodied in the life of God Himself; we receive the cup of salvation and the bread of life—the body and the blood of the Lord.

It is, then, in the Word of God, with its progressive revelation of God's purposes, from dim intimations in Genesis to the full light of Calvary, onward through the vision of the Apocalypse, that we learn the truth of His judgments, so that we need not shrink from them. But we learn this only here. Apart from this we are hopeless and helpless, and there is nothing for us but terror and despair. Undoubtedly men may live without this knowledge of God which brings peace and hope into the human heart, and yet be free for the most part, or altogether, from perplexity or anxious care. It is possible to stifle the eternal part of man's being by absorption in the immediate objects of the moment presented to us by this world. Such a life is precisely that of the beasts which perish, which graze contentedly on the grass in front of them until the hour when the knife falls. And even when it has fallen many men bow for a little while to the inevitable, and dismiss it till the next catastrophe shall come; they exercise their entire self-consciousness only in the actual presence of death and the fleeting terror of disaster. But if a man is fully awake to the facts of life as a whole, the scene of human life presented to him, and the circumstances in which he stands, are intolerable apart from the revelation of their meaning, which is given in the Word of God.

Perhaps we are never so much aware of our utter dependence upon the explanation which the Scriptures give concerning the mystery of life as when we try to comfort some one in sorrow. If we speak of such an attempt to any one else we usually confess that the task seemed hopeless: "I felt so helpless, and hardly knew what to say." A real sorrow seems too great for human help, nothing which we can say or do gets into real touch with it. In the fierce light which beats from actual grief, all that can be said is made to appear as nothing but empty platitudes,

"And common is the common-place
And vacant chaff well meant for grain."

Of course we feel at once that if the assurances of the Word of God are quite true, there is plenty to be said, and with such facts in our possession we should not feel helpless as comforters at all. But we hesitate to urge these grounds of comfort. We fear that it might sound like cant, and we shrink from the suspicion of cant even more than from the possibility of callousness. Moreover, we doubt in our hearts whether, when our own turn for trial comes, we should be helped very much by such suggestions of comfort, and we hesitate to offer to others that which we are not quite sure would satisfy ourselves. And so, in default of a firm belief in Christ on the part of others and ourselves, we fall back on the usual mundane platitudes, which amount in substance to submission to the inevitable, and which fail to give any consolation in themselves, or even perhaps to convey any adequate

impression of the sympathy which we really feel. But such an attempt will at least leave us in full view of the utter absence from the world of nature of any kind of consolation or hope whatever in the distresses of human life. Apart from Christ there is no comfort at all. The Word of God contains an assurance which is absolutely unique. We may refuse to accept it, and turn our backs upon it, but we cannot find any equivalent for it elsewhere.

This assurance is codified in the creeds, and perhaps the facts which we have had before us may throw some light on a sentence in the Athanasian Creed about which many are perplexed: "*Salvus esse non poterit.*" "He cannot be saved," we say in English, and with the associations which we have accumulated around the word "saved," the phrase sounds like a sentence of condemnation. We have inherited a significance of the word "salvation," by which it is referred exclusively to heaven and hell. Indeed, we are prone to think that its meaning is exhausted in the sentence of judgment pronounced by the Almighty at the last day. But in the Scriptures salvation is shown to be a process by which men are now gradually and progressively saved from the evil which clings to them; from the perplexity, terror, distress, and weakness with which they are here beset; it is a present and continuous deliverance, culminating at the last day, but extending throughout a man's whole life, and we may say that, apart from the assurance which we have in Christ, no one can be saved; for Christ gave an assurance quite unique, and apart from that

assurance, we are without hope in this world or in the world to come; or at the best we have a shadowy and tenuous hope, a guess, a conjecture, which the world of nature, and the world of history, contradicts at every turn. The message of the Gospel has so leavened the thought of the Western world with its assurances, that we are constantly seeing the strange, but illogical, spectacle of men who are distinguished in many walks of life denying the sanctions and foundations of Christianity, and yet embracing its comforts and propagating some of its fruits, as though the latter had any independent existence of their own, or sprang from any other source than the revelation which such teachers reject. It is better to face the facts: apart from this revelation there is no reasonable explanation of the present or assurance for the future in which we can feel "safe" amid the changes and chances of life.

God's judgments come to us all in one form or another. It may be in long-continued ill health, and with bitter pains to test our fortitude; domestic, business, and social troubles fall on every one in turn; there are friends for whom we are anxious, bereavements which tear our hearts, disasters which strain our nerves; loss of means sometimes, or that impoverishment by which our life is led into less interesting channels.

Often when looking at such calamities happening to others, we imagine what it would mean if they should come to us, and say, "I could never bear it"; and yet when the cup of bitterness touched our lips, we bore it perfectly well. The strength to endure

what is allotted to us is not given by anticipation, but the promise, "as thy days so shall thy strength be," never fails. Yet we can do something to prepare ourselves for the trials and emergencies which must fall to our lot. Let Him who made and redeemed us teach us through His Holy Word the true meaning and purpose of life, and when in our turn His judgments come to us we shall not shrink from them.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SUPREME DELIGHT AFFORDED BY THE WORDS OF GOD

“O how sweet are thy words unto my throat: yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth.”—Ps. cxix. 103.

THE joy which the Psalmist has in the Divine law reaches its climax of expression in this verse. It is possible that to some temperaments the words may seem to be extravagant and even mawkish. We have often heard translations of continental works of devotion condemned on account of their containing such expressions as these. The use of the word “sweet” to describe the happiness which we have in our Lord is thought to be sentimental and un-English. It may be true, indeed, that such an attitude is not entirely congenial to the English character. We have affectionate natures, and exercise our tenderness with much quiet strength and steadfast permanence; but to rejoice in the exercise of our affections, to realise and set them up objectively as being themselves something to take pleasure in, seems to us more the pose of a self-conscious mountebank than the natural outcome of sterling devotion. In consequence of this, the mystical and affectionate side of Christianity is not

the one which appeals to us most, and when we meet the expression of it we have the feeling that it is something weak and silly (the word in common use is "sugary"), and quite unworthy of the Anglo-Saxon character. That we are right to resist sentimental self-consciousness from occupying too large a place among the constituent elements of our religion, there can be no doubt. Nevertheless we may fairly consider whether we have not allowed our "practical common sense" to carry us too far.

"Jesu! the very thought is sweet;
In that dear Name all heart-joys meet;
But oh! than honey sweeter far
The glimpses of His Presence are."

The author of this hymn was not, as has been frequently supposed, some hysterical young lady in the last stages of a decline; it was written by S. Bernard, a man who shook Europe from one end to the other, and who was the guide and counsellor of popes and kings.

"Joy, joy, tears of joy self-renunciation absolute and sweet."

Here, again, is no fantasy of a weak or disordered mind, but the deliberate utterance of Pascal, who has an acknowledged place amongst the intellectual giants of the world.

It may be, then, that in feeling such distaste and repugnance for a devotion to our Lord which prompts men to use such utterances as these, we are not expressing the criticism which the stronger and superior nature may pass upon the weaker, but are really

laying bare some measure of defect in our national character. It has been said that, numerous as are the persons to whom "The Imitation" has been ascribed in the controversy about its authorship, no one ever dreamed of suggesting that it might have been written by an Englishman. The saying is not true in fact, since Walter Hilton, a monk of Sheen, in Surrey, was one of those whose claims to the honour were most widely recognised. But at least the assertion suggests a certain gap in the English nature which is pretty obvious to others, and of which, indeed, we are not entirely unconscious ourselves. It would be advantageous, therefore, for us to examine our own spiritual treasury, and if we find, as we are likely to do, that there are some precious possessions of the life towards God which are unrepresented in our experience, we shall naturally wish to acquire them as far as may be; and desiring this, we could not have a better teacher than the author of this Psalm.

He shows us in this verse how we should think and feel towards all the means of grace. S. Augustine, indeed, raised the question, "May we properly love the law of God? May we love *it*, when all the love of which we are capable should be concentrated upon *Him*? Is it not allowing our affections to fall short of God Himself thus to fix them on His manifestations?" The great Father replies to his own question on the principles which the Psalmist is exhibiting here: we may properly love the things of God, provided that we recognise them always as channels which connect us with Him. This is a lesson which we greatly need in

our own day. Many confess quite easily their affection for the means of grace who would be embarrassed in speaking of their love for the Saviour.

We may get to love philanthropic work for its own sake; the activity which it brings into our lives is a welcome element to many of the unemployed, or supplies that necessary change of work to busy people, which is said to be the best kind of recreation; there is a deep and real sense of being useful conveyed by it, of not living in vain; the sense of help and healing, the glow and stir of our common humanness as other lives revive under our ministrations, and hearts turn towards us, and cling to us, in their helplessness and gratitude; the satisfaction of open and visible results assuring us that we have not laboured fruitlessly; all this makes the work of blessed charity a delight and satisfaction in itself. And so it is possible for lives to be immersed in it without referring themselves to God at all.

The ceremonies of the Church spread the same snare for us; there are few people who will not acknowledge that, if correctly and reverently rendered, they have a beauty which is all their own. Indeed, no class of person is more clearly aware of their power than those who on this very ground regard them as dangerous encroachments on the spirituality of true religion. By ages of brooding and experiment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as we think, the Church has evolved a scheme and order for the presentation of her Holy Mysteries which embodies all that is highest and most perfect in artistic expression. Colour, movement, and sound are all combined in her solemn functions in a

way which appeals, and is intended to appeal, to every organ of sense, emotion, and thought, and the meaning and purpose which it has as being the symbolism of unspeakable mysteries, the veil before the glory which no man may approach unto, heighten its inherent artistic value beyond all that any mere pageant could possess. Even if the beholder does not believe in the realities which are being exhibited to him, he knows that there are multitudes who do believe in them, and they come, as it were, by proxy to influence his heart. It is possible even for one who cares little for God to be entranced with the observances of the Church.

Further, the Church itself is a great Cause, an institution covered with the romance of age and history, and high ideals, and devoted lives; to belong to her is to have one's name enrolled in the catalogue of those whom all men hold most brave, most beautiful; it is to withdraw one's life from the current of vulgarity, the commonness of duties and the dreariness of amusements which form the narrow round and orbit of a life unilluminated by spiritual things. Think of a man in some mean street, though the same is true of any life with a limited horizon in any street, whose drab and uninteresting career moves from a weary routine at the office to a dull existence at home, varied only by fatiguing coruscations of excitement which have their value in the fact that they make a break in the monotony, not that they bring any satisfaction to the soul. He joins the Church, he kneels before the altar and as in some enchanting dream the iron boundaries of his narrow life melt and fade away, and through a

veil, perhaps, yet clear with the vision of history and promise, the eternity that is in his soul sees its true home; deep answers to deep, the bright possibilities of his thought and fancy are fed with what claims at least to be—not, as in the theatre, the picture of things beyond his reach—but the vision of realities every one of which he can make progressively his own.

In the same way the Bible has its own peculiar charm for the senses and tastes of men. Its appeal as a treasure of literary art is irresistible. A French abbé once said to me that we English little understand the enormous advantage which it gives to the cause of religion to have our vernacular Bible and Prayer-book numbered amongst the supreme literary treasures of the nation. We were reminded of this side of their value when the late Professor Huxley, while conveying in his inimitable style that he thought the Bible to be worthless and even pernicious, misleading in all matters of science, history, and apparently theology, nevertheless desired that it should be regularly read in the schools on account of its literary excellence. We feel that “the Revisers” have not been sufficiently aware that there was a greater value for religion in the charm of the version which they operated upon than in the verbal accuracy which they partially secured; any one can find out, or allow for, minute corrections, but no one can write Elizabethan English. It may be that those who want to simplify and enrich the Prayer-book will do better than this, though the occasional forms of devotion hitherto issued by authority do not suggest any grounds of hope that the literary charm of the

sixteenth century will be at our disposal. Thus the purely artistic value of our sacred books has a power of its own ; and rhetoric applied to sacred subjects has a similar power. The spirits of most people are soothed and exalted by the mellow flow of sonorous words. So far back as the prophet Ezekiel, whose eloquence and force are unquestionable, this natural satisfaction and delight in rhetoric were fully recognised : "Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument : for they hear thy words, but do them not." The enjoyment of rhetoric is one of the artistic aids which the Church offers to the world. It is a curious thing that many who dread artistic expression in music, painting, sculpture, or ceremonial, as being in itself sensual, unspiritual, and almost certain to absorb the soul of man with satisfactions which fall short of God, nevertheless use and advertise freely the attraction of rhetoric, which stands in precisely the same plane. To announce that a particular clergyman will preach next Sunday means that this gifted person will use his well-known rhetorical powers to offer an attractive exposition of the gospel. And yet, strangely enough, this is the only sort of artistic expression the danger of which is explicitly recorded and condemned in Scripture itself.

But the danger exists throughout. We have to guard against it along the whole series of methods by which God manifests Himself to man, and man draws near to hold converse with God. We are not to escape the risk by Puritanism, by refusing to use and

rejoice in these Divine instruments. We can never forget who it was who loved the House of God so deeply that He made it His first and last duty, on the threshold of His ministry and at its close, to cleanse it from all unworthy intrusions; and manifested such absorbing and strenuous frenzy, that His disciples remembered that it had been written of Him, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up;" or how He beheld the city and wept over it, as He discerned its failure and its fate. So the Psalmist loves the words of God because they lead him to the love of God Himself, and we ought to love every means by which God binds us to Him. Only we must always see God in them; we must think of them as channels and not as reservoirs. Jacob's ladder is the true picture of all these means of grace; they connect earth and heaven, and angels, ministers of grace, move along them. They have a sacredness, an essential divinity of their own. Our Lord explained to Nicodemus that Jacob's ladder represented His own Divine Humanity; and we see in the Gospels that the Human Person of the Incarnate Christ was the actual channel of grace; by His lips they were taught, by His hand they were fed; through His Body, when they touched Him, they were healed. The Church, the Sacraments, and the Bible preserve this fact for us. Hence all these are described as being actual manifestations of His Person: the Church is His Body; the Sacrament, His Flesh and Blood; the Scriptures, His Word. We may reverence and delight in these members and organs of His Personality, but we must always do so with conscious reference to the Personality

itself. The attitude of the Psalmist exhibits to us at once the perfect balance between a glowing affection for the instruments of grace, and the faithful use of them as means of access to God. We can hardly find anywhere in religious literature a more passionate joy in the things of God than that which is exhibited to us here ; yet nothing is more remarkable throughout the Psalm than the way in which his heart is concentrated on God. After the first three verses of introduction, there is only one verse¹ in which God is not directly addressed ; every sentiment and aspiration of the writer's heart is offered immediately to the Lord ; it is the record of an unbroken communion between the spirit of man and the Most High ; it is *Thy* commandments, *Thy* law, *Thy* testimonies, *Thy* precepts, *Thy* word, *Thy* judgments. None of these things are considered as having a separate existence for themselves. Is it fanciful to think that we can almost feel, as well as understand, the change which comes over the appliances of religion according as we regard them as isolated objects or as instruments used by Him who ordained them ? There is a palpable difference between *the* law and *Thy* law ; the law, so excellent in itself : *Thy* law, the expression of the Living God. As we pass from "Thy" to "the," there is a felt loss in the elements which make up the conception ; it is as when the sunshine fades away from a landscape ; it is like the vacancy which is left in our feelings when beautiful music ceases. The moment we fall short of the thought of God, or rest in something apart from Him, the soul

¹ Ver. 115.

loses its buoyancy and vitality, and looks out on a dead, mechanical world.

We are told here, then, of an opportunity, and of a danger which is involved in the pursuit of it. We have already learned¹ that if our affections are to be properly developed they must start from "that which is seen." The natural is for us the necessary root of the spiritual. All the external appliances of religion, of whatever kind they may be, are sent to us by God in order that we may make them to be the rungs of the ladder by which we ascend to Him. It is certainly difficult for us who live in a time when all these matters are the subject of a controversy to use them with that naturalness and absence of self-consciousness which is essential to the best results. We cannot wonder that many in the presence of this difficulty yield themselves to a one-sided attitude of negation or over-statement.

Yet it is not sufficiently observed that we can limit our spiritual life to the material side of the means of grace as much by repugnance to them as by excessive regard. The person who cannot worship in a church because of some particular ceremony is in precisely the same estate with those who cannot worship without it. We often meet with a rather pathetic attempt to escape from these perplexities when some one says, "Why do you all trouble yourselves and us so much about these external trifles, instead of being wholly occupied with the greater matters of the law?" The answer is that we cannot escape from the conditions of human life. Such an appeal is paralleled with many similar short-sighted

¹ Chap. II.

suggestions, as when men say, "If every one would give sixpence a week the money would be found." They ignore the law of averages. Every one will not, and probably cannot, give sixpence a week; some will give five pounds and some will give nothing. We have to reckon with the world and its population as they really are.

Nevertheless, this is no reason why we should accept these circumstances as defining the limit of all that can be done. It is useless to close our eyes to the fact that a mechanical presentment both of forms and of phrases is not seldom offered to the people of God as a sufficient satisfaction of their spiritual needs; the evangelical preacher, who delivers a series of phrases from which all meaning and vitality have long since faded; the society which puts up in the waiting-rooms at railway stations such isolated texts as, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"; the priest who allows the most Holy Sacrament to be a bewildering function of unexplained ceremonies, minutely adjusted to the rules of the past, but utterly unrelated to the people attending it—all these, taking it upon themselves, or being sent, to feed the multitude, give them a stone in the place of bread.

But we do not improve our position by discarding the means which God has supplied for our ascent to Him. The remedy is to keep their purpose vividly to the front. We have learned from the Psalmist that such an attitude can be maintained, and that they who make a determined effort to follow his example, to use and to love the sacred ordinances with reference to

Him who has provided them, shall have their way made ready into that intimate communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in which love and joy are consummated in the ecstasy of open vision. Yet it cannot be too clearly understood that the final step in this progression, by which a man finds himself face to face with the Most High, must represent the personal effort and movement of each individual soul. The Greek painter Parrhasius produced such a marvellous work of imitative art as to deceive even his rival Zeuxis. When the latter said, "Draw the curtain and disclose the picture," Parrhasius replied, "The curtain is the picture."¹ So the Church's duty is to exhibit to the world that veil of sacrament, ordinance, and Scripture which hangs before the eternal realities. But her persistent message must be that the curtain is not the picture, although there is woven into it, as into the curtain of the Tabernacle,² some representation of the mysterious existences before which it hangs. Perhaps I shall be reminded that when our Lord was crucified the veil before the Holy of Holies was rent in twain. So it was. Up to that time only the High Priest might enter, now we may all go in; but this much of those old conditions remains, that each man must pass that curtain by himself. The Church cannot disclose the mystery within, though she will do her best to describe it. Her function is to lead people to the entrance, and to give the invitation. Those who go in must do so by the faith and energy of their own souls, and only those who enter can see the glory of God.

¹ Pliny, H.N. xxxv. 10.

² Exod. xxvi. 31; Heb. ix. 23.

CHAPTER IX

THE SERVICE RENDERED BY HATRED IN THE EDUCATION OF THE SOUL

“Through Thy commandments I get understanding: therefore I hate all evil ways.”—Ps. cxix. 104.

AFTER all that the stanza contains concerning obedience, love, and devotion, it may seem strange that its last verse should be occupied with the subject of “hatred.” Yet the power of hating things is one of our natural faculties, and has its own function to perform in our spiritual development. No doubt it is a quality which is easily led astray, and liable to run into excess, but it is not meant to be annihilated from our nature on that account, but subordinated and directed to serve the ends for which it has been supplied. We have already seen¹ that it is possible for us to reach a position of Christian progress in which a great number of temptations cease to attract us; we obtain such an environment, or our character becomes so modified that their bribe or their terror lose their power. Yet such a negative immunity must always be a precarious one. Something more vigorous than simple distaste is needed to keep us thus beyond the range

¹ Chap. III.

and power of evil, and God, who ministers to our safety by providing every aid, which shall yet leave us free agents, has implanted in us a power of detestation by which we recoil instinctively from evil things, the nature of which we have come to understand.

Moreover, the trampling of evil under our feet serves a twofold purpose. It crushes the temptation, of course; but it also supplies us with a vantage ground for further progress. There have been sieges in which the walls have been carried by the access afforded over the heaped-up bodies of the slain. And we are to "rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things." In our spiritual combat we need to call into operation all the forces of resistance, repugnance, and opposition which we possess, as well as those of aspiration and desire. Our feet must tread on the rungs of the ladder which are below us, as well as our hands lay hold of those which are over our heads. By a law of our nature, we can never think or act with all our vigour unless our powers of opposition are called into play.

Bishop Butler has described this law with his usual perspicacity and insight: "It is one of the peculiar weaknesses of human nature," he says, "when, upon a comparison of two things, one is found to be of greater importance than the other, to consider this other as of scarce any importance at all."¹ There are very few people who can explain the importance of any subject without depreciating something else; the mind seems to need the force of a protest behind it, in the same way that a diver gets impetus from a spring-board. Those

¹ Butler, *Anal.*, Pt. II. Chap. I.

who keep this fact in mind will provide themselves with much quiet entertainment at public meetings. I remember once attending a meeting at which a very distinguished person was to deliver an address on "The Housing of the Working Classes." The meeting was held in a hall in which the Church of England Temperance Society regularly worked, and to fill up an awkward interval in the committee room, while we were waiting for the speaker to arrive, I was ill-advised enough to explain to those who were present the operation of Bishop Butler's law. The result was that there was continuous and apparently inexplicable laughter on the platform when the orator proceeded to inform us that Temperance work was no use at all: a mere waste of time and energy; a futile and contemptible effort to keep back the ocean with a mop. The only thing worth doing was "Housing." It was quite impossible for the speaker to correlate these two movements, or to speak as forcibly as he wished to do about the one without condemning the other.

The same condition runs through all the activities of life. In politics we frequently hear of men who are "more effective in opposition than in office"; they need the opportunity for resistance and protest in order to make full use of their powers. Literature exhibits examples of the same phenomenon. It is probable that this fact supplies the grain of truth in the epigram which declares that "critics are authors who have failed." Many men need at least a starting-point of dissidence in order to obtain clear expression for the treasures of their minds. Macaulay is the most

obvious example of a writer whose prose works depended upon this assistance, while the preponderating part which it was allowed to play has excluded them from a position amongst the immortals.

We cannot doubt that this quality in human life contributes greatly to what is called "Protestantism." There is a sense in which we are all Protestants. There is a great number of particulars in which the practices and beliefs of other denominations than our own, and of different sections in our own denomination, are displeasing and offensive to us. Some of them we may feel to be dangerous and pernicious errors from which it is our duty publicly to dissociate ourselves, and, as far as we have power, to expose them and make them to cease. But there are a good many people in whom this attitude of opposition appears to be an indispensable element of their own religious development. As we watch the more public manifestations of it, we can trace a connection between their vigorous distaste for other people's religion and the vitality and progress of their own. The one is so much interwoven with the other, that the negative attitude seems itself to be numbered amongst the aids to holiness. The necessity of declaring that other people are in error is in itself a painful task which men may be conceived of as performing with reluctance and regret under a strong sense of duty. But there is a Protestantism which is a joyous and buoyant thing, triumphing in its own existence and glorying in its proceedings; now it lifts itself up to God, and now it tramples on the foe. There are instances, of course, in which this faculty is developed

to such an extent that it overshadows every other movement of the soul. But ordinarily it enters into the religious life and efforts of many pious people, and maintains its vigour there because they need it, perhaps more than they are aware of, as an incentive to stimulate their spiritual activities.

The expression in the Psalm, however, excludes any improper or excessive use of hatred. The emotion is to be directed against "all" evil ways. We are warned implicitly against the selection of this or that evil way which is displeasing merely to us. It is the things which are declared to be evil by God which are to be the object of our hate. We have here a safeguard against error in the exercise of this faculty. When we find that our detestation goes out against this or that particular heresy or sin, but that other offences quite as heinous and harmful leave our hearts unmoved, we have reason to suspect that our feelings are animated by carnal preferences and not by zeal for God. The man who is indignant at cruelty to animals, but unmoved at the social holocaust of women; who attends meetings to convert the ritualist, but makes no effort to convert the drunkard; who protests against the overlapping of charity, but is tolerant to the overlapping of luxury, is a man who needs very seriously to examine the origin and the reason of the hatred which moves his heart. We are to bring the whole resisting power of our nature against the forces which are hostile to God. We have seen with what violence the Psalmist flung himself against these;¹ so strenuous

¹ Chap. III.

was his opposition that the imprecatory Psalms have become something of a puzzle, and even of a stumbling-block, to a generation which does not possess his zeal for God. It is difficult for us to understand, in our easy-going spiritual routine, that any one should care so much for God's honour and interests. We believe that such strong expressions must have referred to personal enemies of his own, and we are shocked, accordingly, that his wrath should be so impetuous.

Yet the problem presented by these very Psalms reminds us that there is a further definition in the verse before us which limits still more closely the lawful exercise of hatred. It is "evil ways," not "evil persons," against which the feeling may go forth. To the Hebrew this was most difficult. He thought concretely. He had no room for abstract conceptions in his philosophy. The incomprehensible Godhead was itself described in terms of human personality. We read of the eyes of the Lord, the arm of the Lord, the mouth of the Lord; His anger, His love, His weariness, His regret, are all put definitely before us. The opposing forces of evil are similarly conceived of as acting through natural objects and are embodied in human personalities or invested with human characteristics. For him to confine his hatred to such abstract conceptions as evil "ways" was a matter of extreme difficulty, but he made the attempt, as we see here, and we must always credit him with the intention. It was not until our Lord came to teach us more perfectly that the distinction between the sin and the sinner was made decisive and clear. The immeasurable love of the

Saviour for the sinners whom He met and dealt with, the blazing wrath which went forth from Him against the powers of evil, were striking features of the Perfect Humanity. Yet there were instances when even He included in the expression of His anger the persons through whom the evil was manifested. The Pharisees were identified in His denunciation with the principles which they professed. Of course there comes a time in the career of every one who delivers himself up to be the instrument of evil, when he and the sin which he yields to or embraces melt into an undistinguishable unity. This law is illustrated and described by Dante in his terrible conception of the punishment allotted to Agnolo Brunelleschi. A serpent, the embodiment of sin, sprang at the wretched man and bound him in its grip—

“Ivy ne’er clasped
A dodder’d oak as round the other’s limbs
The hideous reptile intertwined his own.
Then, as they both had been of burning wax,
Each melted into other mingling hues,
That which was either now was seen no more.”¹

This is no unusual phenomenon, it is the ordinary course of things; but in consequence of it, the task of distinguishing the evil from the person who embodies it is more than difficult; in the last resort, it is impossible. Only the Saviour Himself, who knows the depths of the human heart, can be certified of the degree in which the person and the evil are distinct or identified. The result is that we must never hate

¹ Dante, “Inferno,” xxv. (Carey’s Translation).

the person, because we can never know the facts of his life. This is what our Lord means when He forbids us to "judge." We must, of course, form judgments concerning other men for the guidance of our own conduct; but we are never to judge their "motives." To say that any one has given to a charity, or attended a Church service, or performed an act of justice for unworthy motives is to speak of things which are beyond our knowledge, and to identify the person with the evil. An admirable example of the attitude which our Lord desires us to assume is to be seen in the manner in which the Church of England uses her Burial Service. She reads it over all alike, except the unbaptized and those who have laid violent hands upon themselves. These are excluded, because the form of that particular service is based upon the supposition that the departed is a member of the Church, and that "God has taken to Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed." These limitations imply no sentence of eternal condemnation on the unbaptized and those who have taken their own lives. It contains merely the assumption that concerning these there is no positive revelation; and as the Church wishes to base her services on that which is revealed, they are inapplicable to those cases about which the Scriptures say nothing. But over the baptized, whose souls God has taken, the Church utters the fulness of her sublime hope, whatever the character of their lives may have been. Whether men have *formally* come within the terms of revealed religion, and have *formally* kept inside them, is a matter patent to observation,

and about which we are competent to judge. But, this being certified, the service is not denied to the drunkard, or the thief, or even to the murderer. It is not that the Church does not hate the evil, but that she does not dare to identify it with the personality. How can we judge what inherited weakness, what dire necessities, what desperate pains, what appalling temptations have beset this miserable soul? What do we know of its struggles and prayers, its renewed efforts, its temporary triumphs, its blind and apparently fruitless battle with the hosts of evil? Where are the scales in which we can weigh out guilt and effort, or the rule by which we can measure the iniquity which shall be sufficient to obliterate baptismal grace? Only the Lord of the Universe can be the judge of such things: He expressly forbids us to usurp this prerogative, and therefore, in the sure and certain hope of everlasting life, we lay our brother's body down in the presence of God,

“Owning his weakness,
His evil behaviour,
And leaving with meekness
His sins to his Saviour.”

For the Church hates every evil way with all the unqualified intensity of her Divine nature; but to the last syllable of recorded time she will love the sinner for whom Christ died.

We have exhibited to us here, then, a faculty which is frequently abused, but which, employed rightly, will be an effective force in the sanctification of our souls.

We have considered already¹ how the vision of higher things can draw us up and away from the power of meaner and grosser conditions; we are taught here that this upward progress is fortified and confirmed by an increasing detestation of the lower estate from which we have been delivered.

We all know how in the progress of material life men come to loathe and to recoil from the less civilised conditions from which they may have emerged. There are numbers of people, more or less cultivated, who cannot conceive how whole classes of their fellow-men are able to live amid the sights and smells with which they seem content; for it is not poverty which creates such conditions so much as the absence of discontent with dirt and disorder. The physical nature of many people has learned to revolt at the mere thought of such a life, and to be compelled to live in it would probably mean for them sickness and death.

A parallel cultivation of human nature within a very limited field of morals exhibits the same characteristics. There are men to whom what is technically described as "honour" has become an essential element in life. They are men who have "that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which feels a stain like a wound."² The non-payment of a debt of honour (though this does not extend to tradesmen's accounts) would bring such men within measurable distance of suicide.

In each of these avenues of development we see

¹ Chap. III.

² Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France."

this principle of revolt and hatred exercising its legitimate power as a force contributing to progress. Is it not reasonable that we should employ it also in the development of our spiritual life? Assuredly we need its help, and it has been implanted in us for this very purpose that we should use it in the interests of the soul.

It is possible that those who have learned to admire the fair beauty of the Lord and to visit His temple, may come to recoil from the secular use of the Lord's Day, by which in its hallowed hours the people "sit down to eat and to drink and rise up to play," and to recoil from it with something of the instinctive repugnance which they would feel for a riotous journey in a Bank Holiday excursion train.

Again, there are many who understand that marriage is a sacrament; not, indeed, a sacrament of the gospel, generally necessary to salvation, and having an outward sign ordained by Christ Himself; but, nevertheless, possessing its own outward sign and inward grace, and endowed with the awful sanctions and the heavenly gifts of the sacramental system of the Church.¹ Such people may come to feel that the

¹ Eph. v. 31, 32, "*Erunt duo in carne una. Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in ecclesia.*"

"The Latin rendering . . . well represents the Greek; for 'sacramentum' combines the ideas of the symbol and its meaning. It is hardly necessary to point out that it does not imply that S. Paul is here speaking of marriage as a sacrament in the later sense."—Dean of Westminster on Eph. v. 32.

The word "sacrament" had originally a very wide meaning, by which it included a considerable number of acts and instruments

secular view of it which widely prevails is not only inadequate, but detestable, suitable only to the beasts of the field, and hideously repulsive when applied to human beings made in the image of God.

And as it is with each particular duty and estate of life, so it may be with the estimate which we come to form concerning our existence as a whole; a life separated from God and given to the world may seem to be a condition so loathesome and repulsive that the soul should feel faint and ill at the mere conception of it, and that there should be no more chance of the world's enticements withdrawing it from God than that the fascinations of a fetid slum should allure a family from a West End square.

which had an outward expression and an inward grace. But its meaning became gradually narrowed in course of time, until it formally included only seven such acts. In our own Church the word was defined afresh, with such special reference to the two great sacraments of the gospel, that the popular mind concluded somewhat hastily that the intention was to deny the name to the other five acts so "commonly called."

Yet the Church did not mean to turn her back on the phraseology of the New Testament, and the system of the first age. The Dean of Westminster further explains Eph. v. 32 (Commentary, p. 239) as follows: "S. Paul has cited the primæval ordinance of marriage, which closes with the enigmatic words [they twain shall be one flesh]. This saying is true, he seems to say, of earthly marriage; but it has a yet higher signification. The ancient ordinance is not merely a divinely instituted law of human life, *it has a secret meaning. . . . I bid you see to it that in common life each one of you is true to its first and plainest meaning, for the sake of the deeper meaning that lies hid in Christ.*" [The italics are mine.] That is a sacrament, though not, of course, what our Prayer-book calls a "sacrament of the Gospel."

We need to bring all our powers of hatred and recoil into the service of our spiritual life. They afford us a security which cannot be otherwise attained, and it is by giving them their proper employments here that we shall best preserve them from being pressed and bribed into the ministry of evil. No one will pretend that the proper government of our complex nature is an easy undertaking. But we are fully equipped for it by the gifts which God has bestowed upon us, and we have sufficient guidance in His commandments.

The stanza which we have been considering forms, with those immediately adjoining it, a landing-place, a halfway plateau, in the ascent of this great Psalm. The Psalm itself describes a pilgrim's progress: the gradual sanctification of the human soul as it mounts from earth to heaven. The stanza represents a momentary resting-place of achievement: the attainment of "heavenly mindedness"; that is to say, the power of looking at things from God's point of view. For the Word of God is the instrument which contributes to the sanctification of the intellect, just as the Sacrament of the Altar is the means of bringing the love of God to man's heart. We know, of course, that God's view and estimate of things differ in many cases completely from ours. It is evident, for example, that He regards death as a comparatively unimportant transition by which we pass to an estate that is far better than our present one, and therefore He allows innocent children and saints who have served Him

to be overwhelmed by it indiscriminately. To us, who see only the dark side of the portal, these promiscuous holocausts of human life are witnesses either to indifference and cruelty *in excelsis*, or are problems which try our faith. Again, God beholds a totally different aspect of the world and its possessions from the one which is contemplated by us, as we see by the conditions which He chose for Himself when He entered by the Incarnation on our life. It is not possible, it may not be desirable, that the limited nature of man, sojourning under the conditions of this life, should attain to the perfection of absolute truth; but some proportion of it must in due course dawn upon every one of us if we are really growing in grace.

This one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, with its wonderful story of man's progressive development towards God, is given to us as a pattern to which we must conform, and by which we may realize ourselves; it must be the model on which every one of us constructs the psalm of his own life, his record, after this fashion, of his spiritual journey. Every soul begins the movements of its mystical life by being possessed with the desire to serve God,¹ and then follows a struggle with elementary, and it may be grosser, temptations within and without.² In the midst of these trials, recourse must be had to the means of grace, that Divine provision of revelation, ordinances, and spiritual fellowship which is summed up under the heading of "The Law of the Lord."³ The faithful use of such means gradually leads the soul of man to

¹ Ver. 1.

² Vers. 9, 25, 37.

³ Ver. 18.

a clearer view of life and duty, until, in the course of its progress, it attains to that "heavenly mindedness" which is described in the central stanzas of the Psalm. Accordingly, the stanza is a point of arrival where one naturally pauses, as we have been doing, in the ascent of the Holy Mount to contemplate and study the panorama of life as it is seen by God.

But it is also a point of departure; for it is one thing to know about God, it is another thing to know God Himself. We know about a great many distinguished persons, from what we read in newspapers, and illustrated magazines, or hear from other men; it is a different matter to know them personally. Into this deeper and personal knowledge of God the Psalmist would lead us as we go forward from the landing-place where for a while we have been resting. Not away from, but through, the instruments and ordinances of religion we pass into the immediate presence of the Holy One. As we draw nearer, the old hatred of sin and sinners melts into grief;¹ the fruits which the Word of God has produced seem to occupy the foreground rather than the Word itself.² Faith is fading into sight, hope is passing into possession, thought itself is being absorbed in contemplation. We catch a glimpse of that supreme moment when the soul finds its perfect satisfaction in God. Lo! the day has dawned, the shadows have fled away, and within the unspeakable glory Man, created, redeemed, and sanctified, is saying to his Lord—

¹ Ver. 136.

² Ver. 145 ff.

"Great living Will, whom no words can name
and no conception embrace,
Well may I lift up my thoughts to Thee,
for I can think only in Thee.
In Thee, the incomprehensible,
does my own existence and that of the world
become comprehensible to me.
All the problems of being are solved,
and the most perfect harmony reigns.
I veil my face before Thee,
and lay my finger on my lips."¹

¹ Fichte ; quoted in G. H. Lewes's "History of Philosophy,"
vol. ii. p. 563.

THE END

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